A TREASURY OF MYSTIC TERMS

PART I

THE PRINCIPLES OF MYSTICISM



VOLUME 1

THE UNIVERSE OF SPIRITUALITY

SCIENCE OF THE SOUL RESEARCH CENTRE

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WITH

BIOGRAPHIC AND BIBLIOGRAPHIC GLOSSARY
BIBLIOGRAPHY AND INDEX

JOHN DAVIDSON

SCIENCE OF THE SOUL RESEARCH CENTRE

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JOHN DAVIDSON

WITH THE HELP OF AN INTERNATIONAL TEAM

A Treasury of Mystic Terms has been compiled using the collective skills of an international team of researchers, contributors, assistant editors and readers with a wide variety of religious and cultural backgrounds. All members of the team are spiritual seekers, most of whom have found inspiration and encouragement in the teachings of the mystics of Beas in India. All those involved have given freely to this project, both as a source of inspiration for themselves, and as a way of showing to others the essential unity behind all the apparent variety in religion, philosophy and mysticism.

Everybody has a perspective or a bias – coloured glasses through which they view the world. So although every attempt has been made to handle each entry within its own religious or mystical context, if any particular perspective is detected, it will inevitably be that of the contributors and their perception of mysticism. This does not mean, of course, that the contributors have always been in agreement. The preparation of the *Treasury* has often resulted in healthy debate!

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PART II – THE PRACTICE OF MYSTICISM

The following volumes are in preparation. Details are provisional and certain to change. For this reason, volume and section numbers are not allocated.

The Return of the Soul

Acknowledgements

The translations of the Buddhist *Dhammapada* are founded mostly upon the work of S. Radhakrishnan and Narada Thera.

Many scholarly translations of Zarathushtra's *Gāthās* into European languages have been made from defective Pahlavi translations. The translations here are from the Avestan, and are based largely on the original work of Dr I.R.S. Taraporewala.

Quotations from the *Ādi Granth* are from the English translation of Manmohan Singh.

Most of the translations of the *Bhagavad Gītā* have drawn upon the earlier translation of Swāmī Tapasyānanda.

The sayings of Heraclitus are found only as fragments, quoted in the works of other writers of antiquity. Various scholarly numbering systems exist for these fragments, the system employed here being that used by Philip Wheelwright in *Heraclitus* (Princeton, 1959).

Most of the translations of Rūmī's *Maśnavī* are based upon the work of R.A. Nicholson.

The indigenous Guaraní of eastern Paraguay, made up of three large subgroups – the Mbyá, the Paí Cayuá and the Avá-Chiripá – are described in books and articles by the most notable experts in this field, Miguel Alberto Bartolomé, León Cádogan, Alfred Métraux and Egon Schaden. Most of the information used for the Guaraní mystical terms derives from these scholars' studies of the Mybá and Avá-Chiripá. If a term is general to all indigenous Guaraní, it is labelled (G); if a term is known only to apply to the Avá-Chiripá subgroup, it is labelled (AC).

The transliteration conventions used for all Avá-Chiripá terms are the same as those used in Miguel Alberto Bartolomé's article, *Shamanism and Religion Among the Avá-Chiripá,* which resulted from his field studies in the northeastern region of Paraguay in 1968 and 1969. Bartolomé explains that since Paraguayan Guaraní has an officially recognized written form, he does not use phonetic symbols except the letter 'y' for the sixth guttural vowel.

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Preface

May I suggest that
You ask forgiveness for me
If my pen has gone astray or my foot has slipped.
For 'tis a perilous thing to plunge
Into the fathomless ocean of the divine mysteries;
And no easy task is it
To seek to discover the Lights Supernal
Which lie behind the veil.

Al-Ghazālī, *Mishkāt al-Anwār* 3:2, MRG4 p.32,
MAG p.57; cf. FSC (3:2.4) p.159

Speech is at best an honest lie.

The Book of Mirdad, BOM p.68

THIS BOOK, IN SEVERAL VOLUMES, is a collection, a treasury, a miscellany. Its primary objective is to elucidate the meaning of the essential terms used by the many different spiritual and religious traditions of the world, throughout history. It is not primarily intended as a dictionary or as an encyclopaedia, nor is it a definitive treatise on any particular subject or religion. Its purpose is to help the ordinary person understand something of the basics concerning his or her religious background, within the framework of a universal understanding of spirituality.

Among these many pages, the reader will find a mixture. There should be something for everyone, whoever they are and whatever their bent of mind. But in a book of terms? That may sound unappealing, but there is a reason for it. Spiritual, mystical and religious teachings tend to use certain terms with particular meanings. Everyday words are often adopted, acquiring a special meaning in a spiritual context. Consequently, if a person wants to inquire deeply into his own religious background – or those of other cultures – it is essential that he understands the meaning of these terms. For if the symbols on the map are not understood, how can they be a guide to the destination?

A Treasury of Mystic Terms is therefore oriented around elucidating the meaning of these fundamental terms. But it is also much more than that. Some of the entries are extensive, more like essays. Moreover, the majority of these entries contain quotations that highlight the meaning of the term or group of terms under discussion. Many of these quotations are beautiful and inspiring; or they have a content that can be a guide in life. It is hoped, therefore, that this treasury will be a rich source of inspiration, as well as information.

Many people read books by dipping in here and there, even though the book may have been put together as a progression of ideas, not really designed for 'dipping'. This book is designed for the 'dipper'! And while it is certain that not everything in it will appeal to everyone, there should be something in it that will appeal to everyone. It is a book for browsing. So if the reader alights on something that does not appeal to him or her, he or she need only move on until something else is found that does.

The arrangement of terms by subject has been made after considerable deliberation. As a system, it may have its imperfections, not the least of which is that the terms depicting the universal spiritual principles of life do not always fall easily into neat categories. Sometimes, a term may have meanings that span a number of subject areas. Even keeping the topics as broad as possible, this is bound to happen from time to time. But the advantage is that a reader can browse a particular subject area with great ease. Reviewing the material that has been collected, and considering the kind of readers it is likely to attract, it has seemed clear that the majority of readers will not be looking up the meaning of particular terms so much as wanting to obtain information on a particular subject, or simply to browse at random. The alternative arrangement of terms in a continuous A to Z sequence would pose significant difficulties for the reader wanting to browse or make a comparative study of a particular subject. If anyone wants to look up any particular term, consulting the index should reveal where the term is located.

One of the fascinating aspects of universal spirituality is that its common denominator from a human perspective is not religious beliefs, nor educational systems, nor social structures, nor anything else like that. Its common denominator is people. It is fundamental to people, something present in all human beings. So, while reading about a particular topic as discussed and understood in one tradition, it is interesting to see how much commonality there is in the way that other religions and cultures have understood the same subject. Often, even the same metaphors and examples have been used by mystics with thousands of both years and miles between them. It also becomes evident how one religion

borrows from and influences another, especially in its formative years. All this is highlighted by the simple expedient of arranging the terms by subject.

But what is meant by universal spirituality? It is the common ground, present in all religious and spiritual traditions. It is spirituality in the absence of religious creeds and specific belief systems. It is generic, not 'brand-specific'. It is inclusive, not exclusive, acknowledging a common basis to all traditions. It recognizes the existence of a God by whatever name He is given and by whatever concepts He is understood – whether as a Supreme Being or Consciousness, a divine Energy, the Essence and Source of all things, a divine Intelligence and Controller, a Creator, an immanent or utterly transcendent power, and so on. It understands that man is separate from the Divine, and it includes the fundamental goal of probably all religions: the quest for a personal relationship with that primal Source. It emphasizes experience over belief and dogma, direct perception over philosophy and theology.

Since one of the intentions of this book has been an attempt to interpret correctly the *original* meaning of the writers of the many quotations, it may contain errors of interpretation. Certainly, there will be differences of opinion regarding interpretations. This is all to the good. The idea has never been to tell the reader what to think or what is what. If the reader is stimulated to think for himself, then our purpose has been accomplished. Everyone has to make his own journey, and discover Truth for himself. But that Truth will not be found in this book, nor in any other; for the best that books can offer is inspiration, not personal experience. But then, that may also be understood as an opinion. So take it as such, and follow your heart wherever it may lead.

A Request for Help

THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN A HUGE UNDERTAKING. A great many people have been involved at various times, in various capacities, over a period of more than a decade. Even so, it is only a beginning, and is bound to suffer from certain imperfections. But, as in the well-known Chinese proverb, "A journey of a thousand miles starts with the first step."

So if anyone discovers any errors, or can make some positive suggestions for improvement of the content, or can contribute new or better material, he or she is unreservedly invited to contribute. Every edition will be a revised edition. Only remember the primary intentions of this work: it is for the *ordinary reader*. We are not trying to impress scholars or seek literary acclaim. *A Treasury of Mystic Terms* is only a way of presenting a collection of spiritual material from as wide a variety of sources as possible, so that people can be helped to understand the essential spirituality within their own religion and culture, and to see how it compares with that of other peoples.

Particular areas in need of improvement include the overall balance of content. We are aware, for instance, that there is limited material from a number of sources. These include Buddhism, Far Eastern religious and spiritual traditions, Jainism, Egyptian esoteric traditions, Mithraism, Christian mysticism after about 350 CE, Celtic and other old European traditions, and the many native cultures of the world. Even the material we have on Native North American cultures, interesting as it is, is not only limited, but is also taken largely from the Sioux tradition when, in fact, there are scores of other Native American traditions, and hundreds of languages, dialects and customs. Additionally, we are interested in broadening the base on which we have drawn for the Indian, Jewish, Christian, Islamic, Taoist, Greek and Roman traditions. We are taking steps to remedy this situation for the next edition, but are open to any offers of help.

Simple suggestions covering a page or two can be sent in at any time, but please document and fully reference all your sources. All material sent in will be carefully considered, but we cannot guarantee a detailed or personal response. If you feel you are able to contribute some significant quantity or quality of material, it would be better for you to contact us first for some guidelines on how to proceed. This is to your advantage as well as ours. We would not want anybody to waste his or her time.

Editorial Notes

Translations of the many texts quoted are either original, or have been taken from published translations, although, in some instances, our choice of accepted translations of primary sacred texts has been limited. In the interests of clarity and after consulting the original source language wherever possible, some translations have been lightly edited or have had explanatory words added in parentheses. We have, for instance, tended to modernize old-fashioned English in non-canonical texts. In some cases, where a number of scholarly translations are available of a particular text, we have made a collation, indicating this by a reference to the various sources consulted. Further, because of the variety of typographic styles found in the many quotations, we have standardized the layout, as well as the spelling, punctuation and capitalization of words. This prevents frequent inconsistencies in the text which would have resulted in confusion. Further, to avoid the confusion to the eye caused by overpunctuation, we have also dispensed with the use of an ellipsis (three dots) when the text we quote begins or ends in mid-sentence of the original. Reported conversations and material quoted within the main text are identified with double quote marks (" … "), single quote marks being reserved for 'particularized' text or quotes within double quote marks. The aim has always been to help convey meaning with clarity, accuracy and simplicity.

Any significant clarifications or additions to a translation offered by ourselves or the original translator have been placed in round brackets, while significant conjectured words or phrases, usually provided by the original translator to fill gaps in an original, defective manuscript, appear in square brackets ([ ]). In the interests of readability, some of the square and round brackets of the original translations have been omitted where the correctness of the bracketed text seemed reasonable. Where translations used have been edited for any reason, this is indicated by the use of *cf.* (Latin, *confero;* I compare) in the source reference.

We have, for example, made extensive use of R.A. Nicholson's translation of Rūmī's *Maśnavī,* taking Nicholson at his word,[1] and using his translation as a basis for most of our own. In many cases, our text simply chooses optional text suggested in brackets or footnotes, often omitting the brackets to improve readability. We have also occasionally used a synonym for some word or other, especially those of an abstruse

or rare nature. Antiquated English has also been modernized, particularly as regards the use of 'thee', 'thou' and so on. But generally we have stayed close to Nicholson's translation. Quotations containing deviations from Nicholson's translation, other than punctuation and layout, have been referenced with a *cf.*

Most foreign words are italicized, with the exception of the proper names of people and places, either historical or legendary. However, the names of gods and goddesses are italicized. Terms under discussion and other relevant terms have been placed in brackets following their translation.

As far as possible, quotations are referenced to both an original language source and a particular translation where this is not our own. However, in a few instances, especially among the Arabic and Persian (Sufi) entries, the primary source of passages has not always been given in the secondary source where we have found them, and we have sometimes been unable to trace the primary source. In these relatively few instances, we provide just the reference to the secondary source. If any reader who knows the text we are quoting is able to supply the primary source reference for use in the next edition, we would, of course, be grateful.

Generally speaking, foreign terms are used for the entry where they are still in common use or where they are familiar to readers of the ancient literature *(e.g. Brahman).* Where the term would only be meaningful to a handful of specialist scholars – as with Mandaean, Syriac, early Mesopotamian texts and so on – the term has usually been given in English (*e.g.* Great Glory, Great Life) and so on. Only when an unfamiliar foreign term is of particular interest is the entry given under the foreign term.

The attempt has been made to use those translations of the Bible, Jewish and Christian, which have meaning for the reader and elucidate the mystic sense of the terms under discussion. It is worth noting that chapter and verse numbers sometimes vary slightly between Christian and Jewish translations. This mostly affects the *Psalms,* which in the Jewish translations are generally one verse longer because the initial salutation is numbered as verse one.

Entries for most foreign terms begin with a *'Lit.'* – meaning 'literally'. This is not intended as an etymology of the word. It generally refers to the literal or everyday meaning of the word, disregarding any mystical or spiritual context. Sometimes, in order to increase readability of the literal definition, we also include the definite ('the') or indefinite article ('a'), although the equivalent article may not be present in the original language of the term as given. Some terms given in English are followed by a short definition of their mundane meaning where this could be

helpful to the reader, particularly as it relates to the use of the term in mystical literature.

Many entries end with 'See also: …'. The terms so listed should be taken only as suggestions for further browsing. They lead either to entries where the same term is further elucidated, or to entries with comparable or sometimes specifically contrasting meanings, either in the same or different languages. Consecutive terms such as *Āb-i Ḥayāt* and *Āb-i 'ināyat*, etc. are not normally so listed, since they are easily seen.

Our use of capitalization is largely as a means of succinctly conveying information. Generally, we have tried not to be 'capitalists', since their overuse can make the text uneven and more difficult to read; but capitals can be useful, and are sometimes the correct form to use, as in proper names. Although languages such as Arabic, Persian, Hebrew, Aramaic, Sanskrit, Hindi and Punjabi have no capitals, we have followed a common custom and used capitals in romanized transliteration. Names of God or the Supreme Being are capitalized, as are most pronouns referring to God (*viz.* You, Your, Yourself, He, Him, Himself, Thee, Thou, Thine, Thyself, but not we, our, me, myself). This makes it clear who is being referenced without necessarily having to indicate it in some other way. Names for the creative Power are also capitalized to highlight their meaning in that context (*e.g.* Wisdom, Name, Word, *Shabd, Davar, Kalimah*), and similarly names and metaphors for Masters (*e.g.* Shepherd, *Satguru, Murshid*, etc.). However, generic terms such as mystic, rabbi, *yogi, 'ārif*, prophet, etc. have not been capitalized. The terms used for some essential Islamic concepts outside these categories have also been capitalized, such as the Names *(Asmā')*, the Attributes *(Ṣifāt)*, the Acts *(af'āl)*, and the Signs or Works *(Āthār)* of *Allāh*. Usually, the names of the higher regions of creation have not been capitalized, although it is true that some are used as proper names. There are simply too many of them, and the text would have become too cumbersome. However, where these terms are non-English, they are in italics, which helps identify their special meaning.

With regard to the dating system, we have used the more universally oriented CE (Common Era) and BCE (Before Common Era), rather than AD *(Anno Domini)*, BC (Before Christ) or AH *(Anno Hegirae)*. To use a dating system based on context – Christian, Jewish, Indian or Muslim – would simply cause too many confusions.

Because of modern attitudes, writers in English are faced with a difficulty concerning the use of 'he', 'him' and so forth, when in fact referring to *all* human beings – men *and* women. In the past, a generalized person or individual was always referred to as a 'he', and that was that. In present times, people are more sensitive. However, the contortions

of language required to avoid the use of gender-specific words in a tightly worded text such as this have forced us to revert to the more traditional use of the masculine, even when the feminine is also clearly included. Most English speakers forget that in many other languages, where words themselves have a gender, such problems do not exist. The genders of a 'person', of 'God', of the 'Spirit' – and so on – are simply a rule of language. In French, for instance, a person *(une personne)* is feminine, but a human being *(un être humain)* is masculine. Hence, such sentences as *'Bill est une personne, Mary est un être humain'* and *'Dieu n'est ni une personne ni un être humain'* are correct. It is unlikely that this solution will please everybody, but we have done our best. So far as the editors are concerned, all human beings share a common and natural equality, regardless of sex, race, colour, religion, social position, or any other external difference. God, of course, is far beyond all physical attributes, even if it is traditional to speak of that divine Power as a 'He'.

Languages and Transliteration Systems

Since this *Treasury* is intended as much for the lay reader as the specialist, every attempt has been made to make the text and its presentation accessible, rather than daunting. It is, after all, a book about mysticism, not language. This has meant, for example, that while our transliteration of the various languages has been based upon standard scholarly systems, we have simplified these where it makes for better readability or is less likely to confuse a lay reader. Thus, for example, we write Kṛishṇa and *shabd,* rather than the more scholarly Kṛṣṇa and *śabd.*

Each of the headwords with which the entries start is also accorded a language code (see below). Where more than one language code is given, the order represents – where relevant – the historical evolution of the word through the various languages. Thus, (S/H/Pu) indicates that Sanskrit (S) precedes Hindi (H) and Punjabi (Pu), and (A/P) that Arabic (A) precedes Persian (P). While this is largely accurate, languages are not so conveniently structured that the words comprising them can be neatly, unambiguously and incontrovertibly categorized and labelled. In fact, the language or languages to which a word or term belongs are not always clearly definable. This is particularly true between Arabic and Persian, and between Sanskrit, Hindi and Punjabi. The designation (H), for example, also includes a number of North Indian vernacular variants, used by various Saints in their poetry.

There are also a great many Arabic words that have become a part of Persian. And although Arabic and Persian share a common script, and many words are written with the same spelling, the pronunciation

is significantly different. In the case of Arabic and Persian, we have followed a simplified version of the Library of Congress transliteration system which uses letter-for-letter romanization rather than attempting to render the words entirely phonetically. Some allowances for the differences between Arabic and Persian pronunciation are accounted for, but in general this system favours Arabic pronunciation. This is unfortunate for Persian, and we are aware of it, but the alternative would be to romanize most words in two different ways, depending upon whether the word is being used in an Arabic or Persian context. Using such a system, many romanized spellings of the same word would become significantly different from each other, causing confusion to the reader who knows neither language, and is unlikely to pronounce either word correctly, however they are romanized. Moreover, it would also require us to assess the likely pronunciation of authors, many of whom lived centuries ago – something more or less impossible.

The Arabic-Persian situation is further compounded by the fact that many Persian Sufis have written all or parts of their texts in Arabic. The *Qur'ān*, for example, is commonly quoted in its original Arabic, even when the main text is in Persian. In some instances, therefore, were a strictly phonetic system being employed, one quote may require the use of two different romanizations of the same word! It is therefore with apologies to the sentiments of Persian readers that we have used the system outlined above which phonetically favours the Arabic. Although largely insensitive to Persian pronunciation, this is simply the least confusing way of doing things for the majority of our English-speaking readers.

In many cases, the Persian term is the same as the Arabic except for the addition of the definite article *(al-)* in Arabic. In these instances, to avoid unnecessary repetition, the language designation is given as (A/P). Also, when *al-* occurs in a leading headword, it is placed after the headword itself (*e.g.* **Ḥaqq, al-**). In keeping with common practice, names which include *al-*, such as al-Ghazālī are spelled with a lower-cased *al-*, unless they happen to start a sentence.

When it comes to Sanskrit and Hindi, we are on firmer ground because there is a more or less standard and accepted transliteration of the *devanāgarī* alphabet, of which we have used a simplified version. Punjabi is transliterated in a manner compatible with the Hindi and Sanskrit. The designation of words to particular languages, however, is not straightforward. While the purists may insist, for example, that some words are not Hindi, but Punjabi (and *vice versa*), the reality is that neither the spoken nor written languages are clearly defined. Words have travelled from one language to the other and back again, and in many parts of North India, the two languages are inextricably intertwined.

Moreover, we are dealing with texts spanning many centuries, during which time these languages themselves, as well as the spelling of many words, have changed, evolved and merged. The Punjabi of the *Ādi Granth,* for instance, though the common Punjabi of the times when it was written, is different from modern Punjabi, just as the English of Chaucer is different from the English of today. Therefore, the allocation of a language code to some of the terms should only be taken as a general indication. There can never be a precise allocation. Also, terms such as *alakh lok* which do – for example – have a Sanskrit equivalent *(alakshya-loka),* but are not actually used that way in Sanskrit literature, are not identified in the *Treasury* as Sanskrit terms. When allocating language codes our intention is to identify whether the term is actually used in a mystical context in the literature of that particular language.

A further source of confusion exists regarding the use of compound words in Sanskrit, which are often – but not always – split into individual words in Hindi, Punjabi and the various associated vernaculars. We have therefore adopted the following system as a reasonable compromise. Compound Hindi or Punjabi words are generally rendered as separate words, regardless of how they appear in the source text *(e.g. sat lok, sahasra dal kamal).* Sanskrit words are spelled as one word where there is no common non-Sanskrit equivalent *(e.g. Brahmavriksha, Brahmarandhra, hiraṇyagarbha).* Where there is a comparable non-Sanskrit equivalent, we hyphenate in the Sanskrit word *(e.g. sahasra-dala-kamala).* This permits the layman's eye to note that the Sanskrit word or term is the equivalent to the Hindi or Punjabi. Terms or names that use a generic word are spelled separated *(e.g. Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad, svādhishṭhāna chakra, karma bhūmi).* However, a number of exceptions to these rules are made for a variety of reasons *(e.g. Brahmaloka, satyaloka, triloka, ātmajñāna, pitṛiyāna, padamāsana, tribhuvan).*

Because of the way written language evolves over time, one word may be spelled in a variety of ways, even in the original language. Again, we have opted for a simplifying approach. We have certainly not tried to be exhaustive of all the variants of particular words. A number of these are either vernacular variations or have been coined by individual writers simply to meet the poetic needs of rhythm and rhyme. In these instances, we have generally used the word in its 'uncorrupted' modern form, even though identifying the 'uncorrupted' form is sometimes a matter of opinion. For example, terms such as *Shabd* (Word) and *desh* (region) also appear as the Hindi vernacular variants *Sabd* and *des.* In most instances, however, we have simply indicated the usage of such words in quotations as *Shabd* and *desh.*

Likewise, in the Punjabi of the *Ādi Granth* (where there the 'sh' sound is absent), we have often used the 'sh' form of a term throughout. Also, while the *Ādi Granth* often has a silent 'i' and 'u' attached to adjectives and nouns (respectively), we have tended to ignore these, when the equivalent Hindi word is the same, with the exception of the 'i' or 'u' (*e.g. sati/sat* and *nāmu/nām*). However, Hindi words such as *ādi* (primal) and *Hari* (Lord), pronounced *ād* and *Har* in Punjabi (but spelled *ādi* and *Hari*), are rendered throughout as *ādi* and *Hari*. Similarly with common terms such as *guru* (S/H) and *gurū* (Pu), where the Sanskrit/Hindi form is more familiar to English-speaking readers, we have opted for that. And again, where a word or name has become anglicized through common usage, like the names of Indian states, we have used the anglicized form, without diacritical marks.

We have used a similar simplifying approach to terms of more than one word where the order of the words in a particular text has been changed to meet the needs of the poetry or for some other reason. Further, when illustrating the usage of particular words, we have commonly treated grammatical variants as the root word itself. For instance, when a word in an original language translates to a phrase in English such as 'with God' or 'from God', we treat it as an example of the root word, without pointing out that it is a grammatical variant which is actually used.

The same is true of the plural forms of words. We have given these only when relevant to the particular discussion, but not as a matter of course. In fact, among Indian languages, following a common custom in English literature, we have generally used a romanized plural form. Hence the use of such hybrid words as *chakras, yugas* and *yogīs*.

The transliterated spelling of the Hebrew terms follows a modified version of the Library of Congress system, which corresponds in many instances to the treatment of Arabic. The significant differences are in disregarding the *aleph*, otherwise transliterated as a superior comma ('), and in rendering both the *kaf* and the *qaf* with the letter *k*, rather than *k* and *q*. In contemporary Hebrew, there is no difference in pronunciation between the two letters and, in most modern transliterations, they are rendered the same.

Transliteration of Chinese poses greater problems than most other languages. Chinese is a tonal language. This means that every word has its own built-in pronunciation, as well as tonal inflection, or pitch and direction of the sound pronounced. There are, for instance, five different words all pronounced *'ma'*. Which word is intended is conveyed entirely by the pitch and the varying of the pitch. Thus, *'ma'* means 'mother' (high, level pitch), 'hemp' (medium, rising), 'horse' (low,

falling then rising), 'curse' (falling) and 'question' (short, light, level). These five varieties of pitch can be conveyed by the addition of either tone marks or tone numbers. *Ma* (mother), for instance, is rendered as either *mā* or *ma*^{1}, while *ma* (hemp) appears as *má* or *ma*^{2}.

Tone marks are not normally added to Chinese text, but in dictionaries, encyclopaedias and scholarly texts, tone marks or tone numbers are usually employed. In these instances, wherever roman transliterations are used, a tone mark or number usually accompanies the word, especially when one word has different meanings depending on the pronunciation. In this publication, tone marks in the form of accents or diacritical marks have been used. The roman transliteration of an emboldened headword is first given in the Wade-Giles system of romanization. The standard Pinyin romanization follows in parentheses. In the main text, only Wade-Giles romanization is used. Although Pinyin has been the standard system in the Peoples' Republic of China since 1958, the Wade-Giles system is used here, being more familiar to readers from the many books on Chinese philosophy.

Notes

1. R.A. Nicholson, *Introduction, Maśnavī, MJR2* pp.xv–xvii.

ABBREVIATIONS

General

cf.	*confero* (L. I compare), compare
e.g.	*exempli gratia* (L. for the sake of example), for example
ff.	following (pages, lines, etc.)
i.e.	*id est* (L. that is), that is (to say), in other words
lit.	literally
p.	page
pp.	pages
viz.	*videlicet,* from the Latin *videre* (to see) + *licet* (it is permissible), used to specify items
▸2	See *A Treasury of Mystic Terms,* Part II

Dates

b.	born
c.	*circa,* about
d.	died
fl.	flourished
AH	*Anno Hegirae,* the Islamic dating system, from 622 CE, the Hegira *(al-Hijrah),* the year of Muḥammad's flight to Madīnah
BCE	Before Common Era
CE	Common Era

Languages

A	Arabic
AC	Avá-Chiripá
Am	Aramaic
Av	Avestan
C	Chinese
G	Guaraní
Gk	Greek
H	Hindi
He	Hebrew
J	Japanese

L	Latin
M	Marathi
Md	Mandaean
P	Persian
Pa	Pali
Pu	Punjabi
Pv	Pahlavi
S	Sanskrit
Su	Sumerian
T	Tibetan
U	Urdu

Sources Cited

See *Bibliography* for full details of published works. Published collections of the writings of Indian Saints have been referred to in source references as below. Other collections published as the *Bānī, Granthāvalī, Padāvalī* or *Shabdāvalī* of various Indian Saints have been similarly abbreviated.

Bullā Sāhib kā Shabd Sār	*Shabd Sār*
Charaṇdās Jī kī Bānī	*Bānī*
Dariyā Sāhib ke chune hue Shabd	*Chune hue Shabd*
Dhanī Dharamdās Jī kī Shabdāvalī	*Shabdāvalī*
Kabīr Granthāvalī	*Granthāvalī*
Kabīr Sāhib kā Bījak	*Bījak*
Kabīr Sākhī Sangrah	*Sākhī Sangrah*
Keshavdās Jī kī Amīghūnt	*Amīghūnt*
Kullīyāt-i Bulleh Shāh	*Kullīyāt*
Mīrā Bṛihat Padāvalī	*Bṛihat Padāvalī*
Mīrā Sudhā Sindhu	*Sudhā Sindhu*
Nāmdev kī Hindi Padāvalī	*Padāvalī*
Ravidās Darshan	*Darshan*
Sant Guru Ravidās Vāṇī	*Vāṇī*
Shrī Nāmdev Gāthā	*Gāthā*
Tulsīdās kī Bārahmāsī	*Bārahmāsī*
Tulsī Sāhib Hāthrasvale kī Shabdāvalī	*Shabdāvalī*

Other texts cited are abbreviated as follows:

AA	"Apocrypha Anecdota II", ed. & tr. M.R. James.
AAA	*Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles,* vol. 2 (translation), ed. & tr. W.R. Wright.
AAP	*Arya* (a magazine), ed. Shrī Aurobindo.
AAS	*Asfār-i Arba'ah,* Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī (Mullā Ṣadrā).

ABE	"Assyrisch-babylonische Mythen und Epen", transcription & tr. P. Jensen.
ABM	"Die assyrische Beschwörungssammlung Maqlû neu bearbeitet", G. Meier.
ABP1–3	*Avesta: The Religious Book of the Parsees, from Professor Spiegel's German translation of the Original Manuscripts*, 3 vols., tr. A.H. Bleek.
ABSC	*Atma-Bodha of Śrī Ādi Śaṅkarācārya*, Swami Chinmayananda.
ABT1–2	"Assyrian and Babylonian Religious Texts: Being Prayers, Oracles, Hymns etc., Copied from the Original Tablets Preserved in the British Museum", 2 parts, J.A. Craig.
ACB	*Aboriginal Conception Beliefs*, C.P. Mountford.
AE	*Apocalypse of Elijah*, ed. G. Steindorff.
AES	*Adam and Eve: The Spiritual Symbolism of Genesis and Exodus*, S.D. Fohr.
AF1–2	*The Apostolic Fathers*, 2 vols., tr. Kirsopp Lake. See *Acknowledgements*.
AGM	*Archiv für Geschichte Medizin*, Leipzig (1908–43), Weisbaden (1943–69).
AGMB	*Akbar the Greatest Moghul*, S.M. Burke.
AGP	*Angle of Geese and Other Poems*, N. Scott Momaday.
AH1–2	*Against Heresies*, in *The Writings of Irenaeus*, 2 vols., tr. A. Roberts and W.H. Rambaud.
AHM	*The Avestan Hymn to Mithra*, tr. & commentary Ilya Gershevitch.
AHS	*A History of the Sikhs*, J.D. Cunningham.
AIM	*American Indian Myths and Legends*, sel. & ed. Richard Erdoes and Alfonso Ortiz.
AMAS	*al-Mu'jam al-Ṣūfī*, Khānam Dr Sa'ād al-Ḥakīm.
AMBF	*Aḥādīś-i Maśnavī*, B. Furūzānfar.
AN	*Asrār-Nāmah*, Shaykh Farīd al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār Nīshābūrī, ed. Sayyid Ṣādiq Gawharīn.
ANET	*Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, ed. J.B. Pritchard.
ANP	*Ancient Nahuatl Poetry*, Daniel G. Brinton.
ANT	*The Apocryphal New Testament*, tr. M.R. James. See *Acknowledgements*.
ANTH	*The Authentic New Testament*, tr. H.J. Schonfield.
AOT	*The Apocryphal Old Testament*, ed. H.E.D. Sparks. See *Acknowledgements*.
AP1–6	*St Augustine on the Psalms*, 6 vols., *A Library of Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church*, tr. members of the English Church.
APAW	*Abhandlungen der Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*.

APJ1–2	*Ādipurāṇa of Ācārya Jinasena*, 2 vols., ed. & tr. Pannalal Jain.
APOT1–2	*The Apocrypha and Pseudoepigrapha of the Old Testament in English*, 2 vols., R.H. Charles.
APP	"Apokalypse des Pseudo-Propheten und Pseudo-Messias Abraham Abulafia", A. Jellinek.
AS	*'Aql-i Surkh*, Shaykh Shihāb al-Dīn Suhravardī.
ASC	*Ancestor Spirits*, ed. Max Charlesworth.
ASDS	*Anurāg Sāgar*, Kabīr, commentary Dayāl Singh and Surjīt Singh.
ASLV	*Anurāg Sāgar*, Kabīr; Lakshmī Venkaṭeshvar Press.
ASN	"Annihilation and Subsistance", Javad Nurbakhsh.
ASOS	*A Seminar on Saints: Papers presented at the Second Seminar of the Union for the Study of the Great Religions*, ed. T.M.P. Mahadevan.
ASP	*Ancilla to the pre-Socratic Philosophers: A Complete Translation of the Fragments in Diels*, Fragmente der Vorsokratiker, Kathleen Freeman.
ASP1–2	*Arnobius of Sicca: The Case Against the Pagans (Adversus Nationes)*, 2 vols., tr. G.E. McCracken.
ATA	"Anaphora Sancti Timothei Patriarchae Alexandrini", A. Rücker.
AVG	*Ahuna Vairya and the Argument of the Gāthās*, I.J.S. Taraporewala.
AW	*The Ancient Wisdom: An Outline of Theosophical Teaching*, Annie Besant.
AWB	*The Ascetic Works of Saint Basil*, tr. W.K.L. Clarke.
AY	*Autobiography of a Yogi*, Paramhansa Yogananda. See *Acknowledgements*.
AYA	*The Holy Qur'ān*, tr. & commentary 'Abdullah Yūsuf 'Alī.
BAK	*The Bahir (Illumination)*, tr. & commentary Aryeh Kaplan. See *Acknowledgements*.
BC	*The Books of Jeu and the Untitled Text in the Bruce Codex*, tr. Violet MacDermot. See *Acknowledgements*.
BCB	*Breviarium Chaldaicum*, 3 vols., P. Bedjan.
BCT	*A Black Civilization: A Social Study of an Australian Tribe*, W.L. Warner.
BDB	*Beiträge zur Kenntnis der religiösen Dichtung Balai's*, K.V. Zetterstéen.
BDC	*The Book of Divine Consolation of the Blessed Angela of Foligno*, tr. M. Steegman.
BE	*Book of Enoch*, tr. R.H. Charles.
BEB	*Burzoes Einleitung zu dem Buch Kalila wa Dimna*, Nöldeke.
BEF	*Black Elk: Flaming Arrow*, Hilda Neihardt Petri.
BES	*Black Elk Speaks: Being the Life Story of a Holy Man of the Oglala Sioux*, as told through John G. Neihardt. See *Acknowledgements*.

BGA	*The Bhagavad-Gītā As It Is,* A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.
BGB	*The Bhagavadgītā,* tr. Kees Bolle. See *Acknowledgements.*
BGR	*Bhaja Govindam,* C. Rajagopalachari.
BGT	*Bhagavad Gītā,* tr. Swāmī Tapasyānanda.
BLBR	*The Book of Legends (Sefer ha-Aggadah): Legends from the Talmud and Midrash,* ed. Hayim Nahmun Bialik and Yehoshua Hana Ravnitzky, tr. W.G. Braude. See *Acknowledgements.*
BLT	*The Book of Lieh-Tzu,* tr. A.C. Graham. See *Acknowledgements.*
BM1–2	*Bet ha-Midrash,* 2 vols., A. Jellinek.
BMJ1–6	*Bet ha-Midrash,* 6 vols., A. Jellinek.
BMP	*Bruchstücke manichäisch-parthischer Parabelsammlungen,* I. Colditz.
BNT	"Babies Are Not What We Thought: Call for a New Paradigm", David B. Chamberlain.
BOM	*The Book of Mirdad,* Mikhail Naimy.
BRW1–2	*Buddhist Records of the Western World ("Si-Yu-Ki"),* 2 vols., S. Beal.
BS	*Bulleh Shah: Love-intoxicated Iconoclast,* J.R. Puri and T.R. Shangari.
BSB	*Bhīkhā Sāhib kī Bānī;* Belvedere Printing Works.
BSBH	*Back to the Sources,* ed. Barry Holtz. See *Acknowledgements.*
BSCD	*Bhakti Sāgar,* Swāmī Charaṇdās.
BSOAS	*Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies,* University of London.
BSSS	*Bullā Sāhib kā Shabd Sār;* Belvedere Printing Works.
CAG	"Coptic Apocryphal Gospels", tr. F. Robinson.
CAN	*The Chronology of Ancient Nations,* al-Biruni, tr. C.E. Sachau.
CB	*The Cosmic Blueprint: Order and Complexity at the Edge of Chaos,* Paul Davies.
CBD	*The Conference of the Birds,* Farid ud-Din Attar, tr. Afkham Darbandi and Dick Davis. See *Acknowledgements.*
CCC	"Cellular Consciousness and Conception: An Interview with Dr Graham Farrant", interviewed by Steven Raymond.
CDB1–2	*Charaṇdās Jī kī Bānī,* 2 vols.; Belvedere Printing Works.
CDF	*Crow Dog: Four Generations of Sioux Medicine Men,* Leonard Crow Dog and Richard Erdoes.
CDP	*The Collected Dialogues of Plato: Including the Letters,* ed. Y.E. Hamilton and H. Cairns.
CDS	*Contemplative Disciplines in Sufism,* Mir Valiuddin, ed. Gulshan Khakee.
CDSS	*The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English,* Geza Vermes. See *Acknowledgements.*

CEDH	*A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the Hebrew Language for Readers of English*, Ernest Klein.
CEI	*The Concise Encyclop(a)edia of Islam*, Cyril Glassé. See *Acknowledgements*.
CGM	*The Call of the Great Master*, Daryai Lal Kapur.
CH	*The Clementine Homilies*, tr. Thomas Smith *et al.*
CHO1–2	*Commentarii ad Homeri Odysseam*, 2 vols., Eustathii.
CIB	*A Child is Born*, Lennart Nilsson.
CL	*Closer to the Light: Learning from the Near-Death Experiences of Children*, Melvin Morse with Paul Perry.
COT	*The Compass of Truth (Risala-i-Haq-Numa)*, Muhammad Dara Shikoh, tr. Rai Bahadur Srisa Chandra Vasu.
CPM	*The Canonical Prayerbook of the Mandaeans*, tr. E.S. Drower. See *Acknowledgements*.
CPS	*Commentaire sur les paradoxes des soufis (Sharh-e Shathīyāt)*, Ruzbehan Baqli Shirazi, ed. Henry Corbin.
CR	*Clementine Recognitions*, tr. Thomas Smith.
CSA	*The Confessions of Saint Augustine*, tr. E.B. Pusey.
CTB	Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum.
CTPD	*The Complete Text of the Pahlavi Dinkard*, 2 Parts, ed. D.M. Madan.
CTT	*Chuang Tzu: Taoist Philosopher and Chinese Mystic*, tr. Herbert A. Giles. See *Acknowledgements*.
CTW	*Chuang Tzu: Basic Writings*, tr. Burton Watson. See *Acknowledgements*.
CV	*Call of the Vedas*, A.C. Bose.
CWJC1–3	*Complete Works of St John of the Cross*, 3 vols.-in-one, tr. & ed. E. Allison Peers. See *Acknowledgements*.
DAA	*The Doctrine of Addai the Apostle*, tr. G. Phillips.
DAAA	*Dreamings: The Art of Aboriginal Australia*, ed. Peter Sutton.
DB	*Dīvān-i Bāhū;* Allāh Wāle kī Qawmī Dukkān.
DBB	*Dayābāī kī Bānī;* Belvedere Printing Works.
DCM	*Dadu: The Compassionate Mystic*, K.N. Upadhyaya.
DDB1–2	*Dādū Dayāl kī Bānī*, 2 vols.; Belvedere Printing Works.
DDS	*Dhanī Dharamdās Jī kī Shabdāvalī;* Belvedere Printing Works.
DE	*The Discourses of Epictetus*, ed. Christopher Gill, tr. Robin Hard.
DEG	*Derekh Emunah*, Me'ir ibn Gabbai.
DES	*Dictionnaire des Symboles*, ed. Jean Chevalier and Alain Gheerbrant.
DF	*Divine Flashes*, Fakhruddin 'Iraqi, tr. W.C. Chittick and P.L. Wilson.
DG1–2	*Dariyā Granthāvalī*, 2 vols., D.B. Shāstrī.

DGG	*Dasam Granth Srī Gurū Granth Sāhib Jī;* Jawāhar Singh, Kirpāl Singh & Co.
DH	*A Dictionary of Hinduism: Its Mythology, Folklore and Development,* James and Margaret Stutley.
DHA	*Dīvān-i Khwājah Ḥāfiẓ Shīrāzī,* ed. Sayyid Abū al-Qāsim Anjavī Shīrāzī.
DHI1–4	*A Dictionary of the History of Ideas,* 4 vols., ed. Philip P. Weiner.
DHM	*Dīvān-i Ḥāfiẓ;* Malik Ghulām Muḥammad & Sons.
DHWC	*The Dīvān-i-Ḥāfiẓ,* 2 vols., Khwāja Shamsu-d-Dīn Muḥammad-i-Ḥāfiẓ-i-Shīrāzī, tr. H. Wilberforce Clarke.
DIH	*Dīvān-i Ḥāfiẓ,* ed. Qāzi Sajjād Ḥusayn.
DL	*Divine Light,* Maharaj Charan Singh.
DML	*Dīwān Malkuta 'Laita,* Bodleian Library MS. DC34 (An illustrated, Mandaean secret initiation text).
DMWA	*Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic,* Hans Wehr.
DNB	*Dīvān-i Niyāz Barelvī,* Anwār al-Ḥasan.
DNP	"La Déesse Nina et ses poissons", V. Scheil.
DOI	*A Dictionary of Islam,* T.P. Hughes.
DOL	*The Dawn of Light,* Maharaj Sawan Singh.
DP1–4	*The Dialogues of Plato,* 4 vols., tr. B. Jowett.
DPB	*Daily Prayer Book,* tr. & annotated Philip Birnbaum.
DPN	*The Dhammapada: Pāli Text and Translation, with Stories in Brief and Notes,* Narada Thera.
DPS	*Dhartī par Svarg,* Daryāī Lāl Kapūr.
DRA	*Discourses of Rūmī,* tr. A.J. Arberry.
DSC	*Dariyā Sāhib (Bihārvāle) ke chune hue Shabd;* Belvedere Printing Works.
DSM	*Discourses on Sant Mat,* Hazur Maharaj Sawan Singh.
DSS	*Sahasrānī,* Dariyā Sāhib, Hindi ms., tr. in *Dariya Sahib: Saint of Bihar,* K.N. Upadhyaya.
DSSB	*Dariya Sahib: Saint of Bihar,* K.N. Upadhyaya.
DSSE	*The Dead Sea Scrolls in English,* Geza Vermes (1988).
DSSU	*The Dead Sea Scrolls Uncovered,* R. Eisenman and M. Wise.
DSTR	*Dīvān-i Shams-i Tabrīz,* Rūmī; Munshi Naval Kishore Press.
DSZ	*The Divine Songs of Zarathustra,* I.J.S. Taraporewala.
DYD	*Dariyā Yoga Darshan,* Ramman Dās.
EB	*Encyclopaedia Britannica,* CD-ROM edn., 2001.
EBB	*Early Buddhism and the Bhagavadgītā,* K.N. Upadhyaya.
ECM	*Epictetus: The Discourses as Reported by Arrian, the Manual, and Fragments,* 2 vols., tr. W.A. Oldfather.
ED	*Eastern Definitions,* Edward Rice.
EDA1–2	*Epictetus: The Discourses as Reported by Arrian, the Manual, and Fragments,* 2 vols., tr. W.A. Oldfather.

EDP	*The Etheric Double*, Arthur E. Powell.
EG	*The Epic of Gilgamesh*, N.K. Sandars.
EGP	*Early Greek Philosophy*, Jonathan Barnes.
EGT	*The Epic of Gilgamesh*, R.C. Thompson.
EHL	*Empedocles*, Helle Lambridis. See *Acknowledgements*.
EI1–9	*Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 9 vols., ed. H.A.R. Gibb *et al*. See *Acknowledgements*.
EIM	*Early Islamic Mysticism*, Michael A. Sells. See *Acknowledgements*.
EJCD	*Encyclopedia Judaica*, CD-ROM.
EKD	*The Early Kabbalah*, Joseph Dan and Ronald C. Kiener.
EKH	*The Essential Kabbalah: The Heart of Jewish Mysticism*, Daniel C. Matt. See *Acknowledgements*.
EMC	*Elimah Rabbati*, Moses Cordovero; Aḥuzat Yisra'el.
EPE	*The Enduring Effects of Prenatal Experience*, Ludwig Janus.
ERL	*The Eleven Religions and Their Proverbial Lore*, S.G. Champion.
ESCN	*S. Ephraemi Syri Carmina Nisibena*, G.S. Bickell.
ESHS1–4	*Sancti Ephraemi Syri Hymni et Sermones*, 4 vols., T.J. Lamy.
ESR	*S. Ephraemi Syri, Rabulae episcopi Edesseni, Balaei aliorumque Opera selecta*, ed. J. Josephus Overbeck.
ETCA	"The Excerpta ex Theodoto of Clement of Alexandria", R.P. Casey.
FBM	*The Five Books of Moses*, tr. with commentary & notes, Everett Fox. See *Acknowledgements*.
FCWP	*Fools Crow: Wisdom and Power*, Thomas E. Mails. See *Acknowledgements*.
FFC	*From Fetus to Child*, Alessandra Piontelli.
FFF	*Fragments of a Faith Forgotten*, G.R.S. Mead.
FH	*Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, Ibn al-'Arabī, ed. Abū al-'Alā' 'Afīfī.
FIN	*Firefly in the Night*, Irene Nicholson. See *Acknowledgements*.
FL	*The Fire of Love and the Mending of Life or the Rule of Living*, Richard Rolle, tr. R. Misyn, ed. R. Harvey.
FLI	*Farhang-i Lughāt va-Iṣṭilāḥāt va-Ta'bīrāt-i 'Irfānī*, Sayyid Ja'far Sajjādī.
FLTM1–9	*Farhang-i Lughāt va-Ta'bīrāt-i Maśnavī*, 9 vols., Ṣādiq Gawharīn.
FMA	*al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyah*, Ibn 'Arabī; Cairo, 1950.
FN1–2	*The Fihrist of al-Nadim*, 2 vols., tr. B. Dodge.
FNI1–15	*Farhang-i Nūrbakhsh: Iṣṭilāḥāt-i Taṣawwuf*, 15 vols., Javād Nūrbakhsh.
FNT3	*Farhang-i Nūrbakhsh: Iṣṭilāḥāt-i Taṣawwuf*, vol. 3, Javād Nūrbakhsh (1983 edn.).
FRN	*The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan*, tr. Judah Goldin.
FRP	*From Religion to Philosophy: A Study in the Origins of Western Speculation*, F.M. Cornford.

FSC *Four Sufi Classics: Salaman and Absal* (Jami, tr. Edward Fitzgerald), *The Niche for Lights* (al-Ghazzali, tr. W.H.T. Gairdner), *The Way of the Seeker* (Hakim Sanai, ed., abr. & tr. David Pendlebury), *The Abode of Spring* (Jami, abr. & tr. David Pendlebury).

FTN "The Forty (Two) Traditions of An-Nawawi", tr. Eric F.F. Bishop.

GCI *A Gallery of Chinese Immortals: Selected Biographies*, tr. Lionel Giles.

GD *Gyān Dīpak*, Dariyā Sāhib, Hindi ms., tr. in *Dariya Sahib: Saint of Bihar*, K.N. Upadhyaya.

GDST *Bar Guzīdah-'i Dīvān-i Shams Tabrīzī*, compiled by Ja'far Maḥjūb.

GG "Guarani Genesis", Rubén Bareior Saguier.

GGG *From Glory to Glory: Texts From Gregory of Nyssa's Mystical Writings*, tr. & ed. H. Musurillo.

GGJ *Gītagovinda of Jayadeva: Love Song of the Dark Lord*, ed. & tr. Barbara Stoler Miller. See *Acknowledgements*.

GGS *Guzīdah-'i Ghazalīyat-i Shams (Selected Ghazals of Shams)*, Jalaluddin of Balkh (Rūmī), selected by M.R.S. Kadkani.

GIP *The Graces of Interior Prayer*, A. Poulain, tr. L.L.Y. Smith. See *Acknowledgements*.

GJ *The Gospel of Jesus: In Search of His Original Teachings*, John Davidson.

GJB *The Gnostic John the Baptizer: Selections from the Mandaean John-Book*, G.R.S. Mead.

GMS *al-Ghazālī the Mystic: A Study of the Life and Personality of Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ṭūsī al-Ghazālī*, Margaret Smith.

GMU *Geburt und Entsendung des manichäischen Urmenschen*, W.B. Henning.

GNS *Gurū Nānak and the Sikh Religion*, W.H. McLeod.

GOSR *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna: Conversations of Sri Ramakrishna with His Disciples*, Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita, tr. Swami Nikhilananda.

GP *Gift of Power: The Life and Teachings of a Lakota Medicine Man*, Archie Fire Lame Deer and Richard Erdoes. See *Acknowledgements*.

GPJ *Gabriel's Palace: Jewish Mystical Tales*, selected and retold by Howard Schwartz. See *Acknowledgements*.

GPS1–3 *Garuḍa-Purāṇa*, 3 vols., ed. J.L. Shastri.

GR *Majmū'ah-'i Āsār-i Shaykh Maḥmūd Shabistarī: Gulshan-i Rāz, Sa'ādat-i Nāmah, Ḥaqq al-Yaqīn, Mir'āt al-Muḥaqqiqīn, Maratib al-'Ārifīn*, ed. Ṣamad Muwaḥḥid.

GR1–2 *Ghaṭ Rāmāyaṇ*, Tulsī Sāhib, 2 vols.; Belvedere Printing Works.

GRJ	*The Gnostic Religion,* H. Jonas.
GS	*The Gnostic Scriptures,* Bentley Layton.
GSB	*Gulāl Sāhib kī Bānī;* Belvedere Printing Works.
GSBM	*Ginzā der Schatz oder das grosse Buch der Mandäer,* M. Lidzbarski.
GSM	*God in Search of Man,* Abraham Joshua Heschel.
GSR	*Gnosis on the Silk Road: Gnostic Texts from Central Asia,* tr. H-J. Klimkeit. See *Acknowledgements.*
GSS	*Gurmat Sār,* Mahārāj Sawan Singh.
GST	*Glossary of Sufi Technical Terms,* 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Qāshāni, tr. Nabil Safwat.
GSV	*Gheranda Samhita,* tr. Rai Bahadur Srisa Chandra Vasu. See *Acknowledgements.*
GT	*The Gospel of Truth,* K. Grobel.
GVM	*The Great Vohu Manah and the Apostle of God,* G. Widengren. See *Acknowledgements.*
GZ	*The Gospel of Zarathustra,* tr. & ed. by Duncan Greenlees.
HA	*Haft Awrang,* 'Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī, ed. Murtażā Gīlānī.
HAG	*Hermetica: The Ancient Greek and Latin Writings that Contain Religious, or Philosophic Teachings Ascribed to Hermes Trismegistus,* ed. & tr. Walter Scott.
HAV1–2	*The Hymns of the Atharvaveda,* 2 vols, tr. R.T.H. Griffith.
HB	*History of Bal'amī,* Bal'amī; cited in *FLTM1.*
HBE	*The Hebrew Book of Enoch,* tr. H. Odeburg.
HC	*History of the Church,* Eusebius, tr. G.A. Williamson.
HEDA	*The Hymns and Homilies of Ephraim the Syrian and the Demonstrations of Aphrahat the Persian Sage,* tr. J. Gwynn.
HETI	"The Heart: The Eye and Temple of the Imaginal, According to Ebno'l-'Arabi and Tantric Buddhism", Hugh Urban.
HEU	*108 Upanishads,* ed. Acharya Shivram Sharma.
HG	*Hymns to the Goddess: Translated from the Sanskrit,* Arthur & Ellen Avalon.
HGKA	*The History of God,* Karen Armstrong.
HH1–4	*Herodotus,* 4 vols., tr. A.D. Godley.
HHC	*Hua Hu Ching: The Later Teachings of Lao Tzu,* Hua-Ching Ni.
HHG	*The First Book of the Ḥadīqatu'l-Ḥaqīqat or the Enclosed Garden of the Truth of Ḥakīm Abū'l-Majd Majdūd Sanā'ī of Ghazna,* ed. & tr. Major J. Stephenson.
HHH	*Hesiod: The Homeric Hymns and Homerica,* tr. Hugh G. Evelyn-White.
HIC	*Hadith Page of al-Islam:* A new compilation; http://hadith/al-islam.com/Bayan/.
HIMA1–3	*History of the Inquisition of the Middle Ages,* 3 vols., H. Lea.
HJM	*History of Jewish Mysticism,* Ernst Muller.

HJPJ — *A History of the Jews*, Paul Johnson.
HMM — *Hasidism and Modern Man*, Martin Buber.
HMP — *Hindu Mythology: Vedic and Puranic*, W.J. Wilkins.
HMV — *W.B. Henning Memorial Volume*, ed. Mary Boyce and Ilya Gershevitch.
HOB — *Ḥayyei 'Olam ha-Ba (Life of the Future World)*, Abraham Abulafia.
HPW — *Heraclitus*, P. Wheelwright. See *Acknowledgements*.
HQSA — *The Holy Qur'ān: English Translation of the Meaning and Commentary;* Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques.
HR2 — *Handschriften-Reste in Estrangelo-Schrift aus Turfan, Chinesisch-Turkistan II*, F.W.K. Müller.
HRV1–2 — *The Hymns of the Rgveda*, 2 vols, tr. R.T.H. Griffith.
HS — *The Hymn of the Soul: Contained in the Syriac Acts of Thomas*, ed. & tr. A.A. Bevan.
HS1–2 — *A History of the Sikhs*, 2 vols., Khushwant Singh.
HSB — *Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, tr. M. Muhsin Khan; www.islamworld.net/#hadith. See *Acknowledgements*.
HSC — *The Heritage of Sufism*, 3 vols., Leonard Lewisohn; vol. 1: *Classical Persian Sufism from its Origins to Rumi*. See *Acknowledgements*.
HSI1-2 — *A History of Sufism in India*, 2 vols., Saiyid Athar Abbas Rizvi.
HSP — *A History of the Sikh People*, Gopal Singh.
HTU — *One Hundred and Twelve Upanishads and Their Philosophy*, A.N. Bhaṭṭāchārya.
HV1–25 — *Hindi Vishvakosh*, 25 vols., ed. Nagendranāth Vasu.
HVJM — *History and Variety of Jewish Meditation*, Mark Verman.
HVP — *Commentary of Hierocles on the Golden Verses of Pythagoras*, A. Dacier, tr. N. Rowe.
HWP — *History of Western Philosophy*, Bertrand Russell.
HYK — *Hokken den yakuchû kaisetsu: Hokusôbon nansôbon kôrai daizôkyôbon ishiyamaderabon yonshu eiin to sono hikaku kenkyû*, Kazutoshi Nakagawa.
HYP — *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, tr. Pancham Singh.
HZ — *History of Zoroastrianism*, M.N. Dhalla.
IA — *Indian Architecture: Islamic Period* (vol. 2), Percy Brown.
IADS1–2 — *Isaaci Antiochi, Doctoris Syrorum, Opera Omnia*, 2 vols., G.S. Bickell.
IAP — *An Introduction to Ancient Philosophy*, A.H. Armstrong.
ICD — *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines: Conceptions of Nature and Methods used for its Study by the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', al-Bīrūnī and Ibn Sīnā*, Seyyed Hossein Nasr.
ICW — *I Ching or Book of Changes: The Richard Wilhelm Translation*, tr. Cary F. Baynes.

ID	*Icanchu's Drum: An Orientation to Meaning in South American Religions,* Lawrence E. Sullivan.
IDB	*Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn,* Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazālī: Beirut.
IDC	*Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn,* Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazālī: Cairo.
IGI	*The Influence of Greek Ideas on Christianity,* Edwin Hatch.
IK	*al-Insān al-Kāmil,* 'Azīz al-Dīn Nasafī, ed. M. Molé.
IL	*The Inner Life,* Charles W. Leadbeater (abridged from the author's original 2 vol., 1910–11 edn.).
ILP	*Iamblichus' Life of Pythagoras or Pythagoric Life,* Thomas Taylor.
IM	*Indian Mythology,* Veronica Ions.
IME	*Iamblichus on the Mysteries of the Egyptians, Chaldeans and Assyrians,* tr. Thomas Taylor.
IP1–2	*Indian Philosophy,* 2 vols., S. Radhakrishnan. See *Acknowledgements.*
IPSO	*De inquisitione pacis sive de studio oratione,* Fr. Alvarez de Paz.
IS	*Iṣṭilāḥāt-i Ṣūfīyah,* Farīd Aḥmad Ṣamdī.
ISJ	*Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Ṣūfīyah,* 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī, ed. Muḥammad Kamāl Ibrāhīm Ja'far.
ISQ	*Iṣṭilāḥāt-i Ṣūfīyah: An Appendix to Sharḥ-i Manāzil al-Sārīn,* 'Abd al-Razzāq Qāshānī.
IW	*Imaginal Worlds: Ibn al-'Arabi and the Problem of Religious Diversity,* W.C. Chittick.
J1–10	*Josephus,* 10 vols., tr. H. St.J. Thackeray *et al.*
JA	*Joseph and Asenath,* E.W. Brooks.
JB	*The Jerusalem Bible* (1966). See *Acknowledgements.*
JBE1–2	*A Journey from Bengal to England through North India, Kashmir, Afghanistan and Persia into Russia, 1783–1784,* 2 vols., George Forster.
JCL	*The CD-ROM Judaic Classics Library (The Soncino Talmud, The Soncino Midrash Rabbah, The Soncino Zohar, The Bible);* Institute for Computers in Jewish Life & Davka Corporation.
JCW	*Josephus: His Complete Works,* tr. W. Whiston.
JDPW	*St Jerome: Dogmatic and Polemical Works,* J.N. Hritzu.
JM	*Das Johannesbuch der Mandäer,* M. Lidzbarski (German Translation).
JMM	*Das Johannesbuch der Mandäer,* M. Lidzbarski (Mandaean Text).
JMT	*The Jewish Mystical Tradition,* Ben Zion Bokser. See *Acknowledgements.*
JPS	*Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures,* 2 vols.; Jewish Publication Society of America. See *Acknowledgements.*
JRAS	*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society.*
JS1–2	*Jewish Spirituality: From the Bible Through the Middle Ages*

	(vol. 1) and *Jewish Spirituality: From the Sixteenth-Century Revival to the Present* (vol. 2), ed. Arthur Green.
JSB1–2	*Jagjīvan Sāhib kī Bānī*, 2 vols.; Belvedere Printing Works.
JW	*The Jewish War*, Josephus, tr. G.A. Williamson.
KA1–10	*Kashf al-Asrār va-'Uddat al-Abrār*, 10 vols., Abū al-Fażl Rashīd al-Dīn Maybudī, ed. 'Alī Aṣghar Ḥikmat.
KAQ	*Kitāb al-Itḥāfāt al-Sanīyah fī al-Aḥādīth al-Qudsīyah;* Hyderabad, 1944.
KAR	*Keilschrifttexte aus Assur religiösen Inhalts*, E. Ebeling.
KB	*The Jerusalem Bible*, English text rev. & ed. Harold Fisch; Koren Publishers. See *Acknowledgements.*
KBS	*Kullīyāt-i Bulleh Shāh*, Faqīr Muḥammad.
KDA	*Keshavdās Jī kī Amīghūnt;* Belvedere Printing Works.
KDG	*Kālidāsa Granthāvalī*, ed. Āchārya Sītārām Chaturvedī.
KDS1–2	*Kullīyāt-i Dīvān-i Shams: Maulānā Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Mashhūr bi Maulavī*, 2 vols., B. Furūzānfar.
KF	*Kitāb al-Fihrist*, al-Nadīm, ed. G. Flügel.
KFF	*Kitāb Fīhi mā Fīhi*, Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, ed. B. Furūzānfar.
KG	*Kabīr Granthāvalī*, ed. Shyām Sundardās.
KHI	*Kullīyāt-i Shaykh Fakhr al-dīn Ibrāhīm Hamadānī 'Irāqī*, ed. Sa'īd Nafīsī.
KI	*The Koran Interpreted*, 2 vols., tr. A.J. Arberry. See *Acknowledgements.*
KIF	*Kashshāf Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Funūn (A Dictionary of the Technical Terms used in the Sciences of the Musalmans)*, Muḥammad 'Alā ibn 'Alī al-Tahānavī, ed. Mawlavī Muḥammad Wajīh *et al.*
KJV	*The Authorized Version of the Bible (The King James Bible)* [1611]. See *Acknowledgements.*
KKA	*Ha-Kabbalah be Kitvei Rabbenu Baḥya ben Asher*, Ephraim Gottlieb.
KKT	*Kitāb-i Kāmil al-Tavārīkh*, Ibn-i Aśīr; cited in *FLTM1.*
KM	*Kashf al-Mahjūb: The Oldest Persian Treatise on Sufiism*, 'Alī b. 'Uthmān al-Jullābī al-Hujwīrī, ed. & tr. R.A. Nicholson. See *Acknowledgements.*
KMC1–4	"Der Kölner Mani-Codex" *(Codex Manichaicus Coloniensis)*, 4 parts, ed. A. Henrichs and L. Koenen.
KMI1–4	"Keilschrifttexte medizinischen Inhalts", 4 parts, Erich Eberling.
KNP	*Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, Moshe Idel.
KOT	*The Kephalaia of the Teacher: The Edited Coptic Manichaean Texts in Translation with Commentry*, Iain Gardner. See *Acknowledgements.*
KS	*Kīmiyā-yi Sa'ādat*, Imām Muḥammad Ghazālī, ed. Aḥmad Ārām.

KSA	*Akhrāvatī: Kabīr Sahab kā Pūrā Granth;* Belvedere Printing Works.
KSB	*Kabīr Sāhib kā Bījak;* Belvedere Printing Works.
KSD1–10	*Kullīyāt-i Shams yā Dīvān-i Kabīr (Dīvān-i Shams-i Tabrīz),* 10 vols., ed. B. Furūzānfar.
KSS	*Kabīr Sākhī Sangrah;* Belvedere Printing Works.
KSS1–4	*Kabīr Sāhib kī Shabdāvalī,* 4 vols.; Belvedere Printing Works.
KSSY	*Kabīr Samagra,* 2 vols., Dr Yugeshwar.
KST	*Kullīyāt-i Shams-i Tabrīz;* Munshi Naval Kishore.
KT	*Kitāb al-Ta'rīfāt,* Jurjānī, ed. G. Flügel.
KTA	*Kitāb al-Ta'rīfāt,* 'Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Jurjānī, ed. Ibrāhīm al-Ābyārī.
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SRBP	*Sefer ha-Rimmon (The Book of the Pomegranate)*, Moses de Leon, ed. Elliot R. Wolfson.
SRM	*Sikh Reht Maryada: The Code of Sikh Conduct and Conventions* (English Version of the *Sikh Reht Maryada*), tr. Kulraj Singh.
SROH	*Selections from the Rubaiyāt and Odes of Hāfiz*, tr. by a member of the Persia Society of London (F.M. Rundall).
SS1–6	*Satsang Sangrah*, 6 vols., Mahārāj Charan Singh.
SSE1–15	*Sufi Symbolism: The Nurbakhsh Encyclopedia of Sufi Terminology*, 15 vols., Javad Nurbakhsh, tr. Terry Graham *et al.* See *Acknowledgements.*
SSM1–3	*Studies of the Spanish Mystics*, 3 vols., E. Allison Peers.
SSMM	*Sabbatai Ṣevi: The Mystical Messiah*, Gershom G. Scholem.
SSR	*Shrī Sant Rohidās*, Ashok Prabhākar Kāmat.
SSV	*Siva Samhita*, tr. Rai Bahadur Srisa Chandra Vasu. See *Acknowledgements.*
ST	*Sharḥ-i Ta'arruf*, Abū Isḥāq Muḥammad ibn-i Ibrāhīm Bukhārī Kalābādī.
STG	*Shrī Tukārām Bāvāñchyā Abhangāñchī Gāthā*, ed. Shrī P.M. Lāḍ.
SUV	*Sixty Upanisads of the Veda*, 2 vols., Paul Deussen, tr. from German, V.M. Bedekar and G.B. Palsule.
SVS	"The Amarna Tablet", O. Schroeder.
SW	*Sufi Women*, Dr Javad Nurbakhsh.
SWP	*Select Works of Plotinus*, tr. T. Taylor.
TAA	*The Tarjumān al-Ashwāq: A Collection of Mystical Odes*, Muḥyī'ddīn Ībn al-'Arabī, tr. R.A. Nicholson.
TAB1–2	*Textes religieux assyriens et babyloniens*, F. Martin, 2 vols.

TAI	*Tadhkirat al-Awliyā'*, Shaykh Farīd al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār Nīshābūrī, ed. Muḥammad Isti'lāmī.
TAN1–2	*Tadhkirat al-Awliyā'*, Shaykh Farīd al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār Nīshābūrī, ed. R.A. Nicholson.
TAT	*Taṣawwuf va-Adabīyāt-i Taṣawwuf*, including *Mir'āt-i 'Ushshāq* (an anonymous glossary of Sufi terms), Y.E. Bertels, tr. from Russian into Persian by Sirus Izadi.
TBP	*Travels of Fah-Hian and Sun Yun, Buddhist Pilgrims from China to India*, S. Beal.
TBS	*Tattva Bodha of Sankaracharya*, tr. & commentary Swami Chinmayananda.
TC	*The Chakras*, Charles W. Leadbeater.
TCK	"The Three-Character Rhymed Classic on the Ka'bah (the *Cube of Heaven*)", Ma Fu-ch'u, tr. Peter Hobson.
TDB	*Tulsīdās Jī kī Bārahmāsī*, Shri Goswāmī Tulsīdās Jī.
TFH	"Travels of Fa-Hsien"; in *Taisho Tripitaka*, vol. 51.
TGH1–3	*Thrice-Greatest Hermes*, 3 vols., G.R.S. Mead.
TL	*The Tree of Life: Chayyim Vital's Introduction to the Kabbalah of Isaac Luria (The Palace of Adam Kadmon)*, tr. Donald Wilder Menzi and Zwe Padeh.
TLV	"Tammuz-Liturgien und Verwandtes", P.M. Witzel.
TMT	*A Talmudic Miscellany: A Thousand and One Extracts from the Talmud, the Midrashim and the Kabbalah*, tr. Paul Isaac Hershon.
TMU	*Thirty Minor Upaniṣads*, tr. by K. Narayanasvami Aiyar.
TNWT	*Tao: A New Way of Thinking*, Chang Chung-Yuan. See *Acknowledgements*.
TOP	*The Treatise of the Pool*, Obadyah Maimonides, ed. & tr. Paul Fenton.
TPU	*Thirteen Principal Upanishads*, tr. R.E. Hume.
TQH	*Tamhīdāt*, 'Ayn al-Quḍat Hamadānī, ed. Afif Osseiran.
TRCM	*Tulasidasa's Shri Rāmacharitamanasa: The Holy Lake of the Acts of Rama*, ed. & tr. R.C. Prasad.
TS	*The Teachings of Silvanus*, J. Zandee.
TSH1–2	*Tulsī Sāhib Hāthrasvale kī Shabdāvalī*, 2 vols.; Belvedere Printing Works.
TSM	*Thus Saith The Master*, Maharaj Charan Singh.
TSS	*Textual Sources for the Study of Sikhism*, W.H. McLeod.
TT1–2	*The Texts of Taoism*, 2 vols., tr. James Legge.
TTCL	*Tao Te Ching*, Lao Tzu, tr. D.C. Lau.
TTCT	*Tao Te Ching: A New Translation*, Ch'u Ta-Kao. See *Acknowledgements*.
TTCW	*Tao Te Ching*, Lao Tzu, tr. John C. H. Wu.
TTQ	*The Thousand and Twelve Questions (Alf Trisar Šuialia):*

	A Mandaean Text edited in Transliteration and Translation, E.S. Drower. See *Acknowledgements*.
TTT1–6	"Türkische Turfan-Texte", 6 parts, W. Bang and A. von Gabain.
TVS	*Thousand Ways to the Transcendental: Vishnu Sahasranama*, tr. & commentary Swami Chinmayananḍa.
TWT	*Three Ways of Thought in Ancient China*, Arthur Waley. See *Acknowledgements*.
TYN	*The New Testament*, tr. William Tyndale.
U1–4	*The Upanishads*, 4 vols., tr. & commentary Swami Nikhilananda. See *Acknowledgements*.
UAQJ	*Utterances (Malfūẓāt) of Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī*, tr. Muhtar Holland.
UJM	*Understanding Jewish Mysticism*, David Blumenthal.
UWOT	*The Uncanonical Writings of the Old Testament Found in the Armenian mss. of the Library of St Lazarus*, tr. J. Issaverdens.
VC	*Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, Śrī Śankarācārya, tr. Swāmī Turiyānanda.
VE	*The Vedic Experience*, Raimundo Panikkar. See *Acknowledgements*.
VEGA	*Virgil: Eclogues, Georgias, Aeneid I-VI*, tr. H. Rushton Fairclough, rev. G.P. Gould.
VME1–2	*Vida* (Life) and other works, 2 vols., Marina de Escobar.
VP	*The Vishṇu Purāṇa*, tr. H.H. Wilson.
VPL	*De vita Pythagorica liber*, Iamblichi, ed. L. Deubner.
VS	*Vivek Sāgar*, Dariyā Sāhib, Hindi ms., tr. in *Dariya Sahib: Saint of Bihar*, K.N. Upadhyaya.
VSB	*The Voice of the Silence*, H.P. Blavatsky.
VSY	*Vedāntasāra (The Essence of Vedānta) of Sadānanda Yogindra*, tr. Swāmī Nikhilānanda.
VTD	*Vinayapatrikā*, Tulsīdās; Gītā Press.
WALT	*The Way of Life According to Lao Tzu*, tr. & commentary Witter Bynner.
WBC1–4	*The Works of Bernard of Clairvaux, On the Song of Songs*, 4 vols., tr. K. Walsh and I.M. Edmonds.
WCA1–2	*The Writings of Clement of Alexandria*, 2 vols., tr. W. Wilson.
WFA	*The Writings of St Francis of Assisi*, Constance, Countess de la Warr.
WGMI	*With a Great Master in India*, Julian Johnson.
WGT	*The Walled Garden of Truth*, Hakim Sanai, tr. & abr. D.L. Pendelbury.
WJMA	*The Writings of Justin Martyr and Athenagoras*, tr. M. Dods.
WL	*The Works of Lactantius*, ed. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson.
WLLT	*The Way of Life Lao Tzu: A New Translation of the Tao Te Ching*, R.B. Blakney.
WLT	*The Wisdom of Laotse*, tr. Lin Yutang. See *Acknowledgements*.

WM *Western Mysticism: The Teachings of Sts Augustine, Gregory and Bernard on Contemplation and the Contemplative Life*, C. Butler.
WMM *The Way of a Mohammedan Mystic*, W.H.T. Gairdner.
WO1–2 *The Writings of Origen*, 2 vols., tr. F. Crombie.
WP *The Wisdom of the Prophet (Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam)*, Muhyī-d-Din ibn 'Arabi, tr. (from Arabic to French) Titus Burckhardt, tr. (from French to English) Angela Culme-Seymour.
WPJ1–4 *The Works of Philo Judaeus*, 4 vols., tr. C.D. Yonge.
WS1–7 *Woodbrooke Studies: Christian Documents in Syriac, Arabic and Garshuni*, 7 vols., ed. & tr. A. Mingana.
WTDA *The Works of Gregory Thaumaturgus, Dionysius of Alexandria and Archelaus*, tr. S.D.F. Salmond.
WTM1–3 *With the Three Masters*, 3 vols., Rai Sahib Munshi Ram.
WTT *The Writings of Tatian and Theophilus and the Clementine Recognitions*, tr. B.P. Pratten, Marcus Dods and Thomas Smith.
WWB *Who Wrote the Bible?* R.E. Friedman.
WZ1–3 *The Wisdom of the Zohar: An Anthology of Texts*, 3 vols., arranged by Fischel Lachower and Isaiah Tishby. See *Acknowledgements*.
XSM *Xuāstvānīft: Studies in Manichaeism*, Jes P. Asmussen.
YD *Yuen Dao: Tracing Dao to its Source*, tr. D.C. Lau and Roger T. Ames.
YGC *Yahwe and the Gods of Canaan*, W.F. Albright.
YU *The Yoga Upaniṣads*, tr. T.R. S'rīnivāsa Ayyaṅgār, ed. Paṇḍit S. Subrahmaṇya S'āstrī.
ZBS *The Zohar: The Book of Splendour*, selected & ed. Gershom G. Scholem.
ZDMG *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft.*
ZM *Zoroastrian Morals*, I.J.S. Taraporewala, contributed to *Encyclopedia of Morals*, ed. Vergilius Ferm.
ZP *Zoroastrian Philosophy*, I.J.S. Taraporewala, contributed to *A History of Philosophical Systems.*
ZSS1–5 *The Zohar*, 5 vols., tr. Harry Sperling and Maurice Simon.
ZT *Zoroastrian Theology: From the Earliest Times to the Present Day*, M.N. Dhalla.

THE UNIVERSE OF SPIRITUALITY



1.1 Mysticism

Wherever man exists, so does mysticism. Man is a conscious being, and the essence of mysticism is a transcendental experience in the sphere of consciousness. It is something that a person lives, not a philosophy or doctrine which is read or studied. In its broadest sense, it is an expansion of normal consciousness, an awakening of hidden potential such that understanding beyond that of normal human reasoning and mental activity becomes inwardly manifest. Those who are fortunate enough to have such experiences also feel an interior joy and ecstasy, a bliss that brings them closer to God within themselves. The culmination of such ecstasy is union with God, within. Mystical and religious writings contain many descriptions of such experiences, and the mystics themselves – sometimes persecuted during their own lifetimes – are often heralded later as the foremost of their faith.

It is significant that no one who has experienced anything remotely mystical has ever regarded it as something other than a glimpse of a higher reality. Like awakening from sleep, the experience carries with it its own innate touchstone of validity. Those who discount mystic experience as simply the product of religious hysteria or an overheated brain have rarely studied the matter at first hand. If they had ever met and conversed with those who have been the frequent recipients of genuine mystic experience, they would have realized that this had only been accomplished by a balanced self-discipline and a control of the mind and emotions that is quite inconceivable to most people. True mystics are wise, understanding and balanced human beings, not fanatical, self-seeking or emotionally overwrought. In fact, uncontrolled emotion and imagination will actually prevent a person from concentrating their consciousness within, and make true mystic experience impossible.

No amount of theology or reasoning can replace mystic experience. True mystics do not use reason or philosophy as their primary means of understanding the nature of Reality, for they have realized that there can be no real understanding without direct experience. Even so, while reason cannot lead to or enhance mystic experience, mystic experience or simply a strong feeling for the mystical have illumined the minds of many of the world's greatest men and women:

> Two facts in connection with mysticism are undeniable, whatever it may be, and whatever part it is destined to play in the development of thought and of knowledge. In the first place, it is the leading characteristic of some of the greatest thinkers of the world – of the founders of … religions, of Plato and Plotinus, of Eckhart and Bruno, of Spinoza, Goethe and Hegel.

> Secondly, no one has ever been a lukewarm, an indifferent, or an unhappy mystic. If a man has this particular temperament, his mysticism is the very centre of his being: it is the flame which feeds his whole life; and he is intensely and supremely happy just so far as he is steeped in it.
>
> *C.F.E. Spurgeon, Mysticism in English Literature, MEL p.2*

The same author also comments on the certainty of the mystic concerning his experience:

> The mystic is somewhat in the position of a man who, in a world of blind men, has suddenly been granted sight, and who, gazing at the sunrise, and overwhelmed by the glory of it, tries, however falteringly, to convey to his fellows what he sees. They, naturally, would be sceptical about it, and would be inclined to say that he is talking foolishly and incoherently.
>
> But the simile is not altogether parallel. There is this difference. The mystic is not alone; all through the ages we have the testimony of men and women to whom this vision has been granted, and the record of what they have seen is amazingly similar, considering the disparity of personality and circumstances. And further, the world is not peopled with totally blind men. The mystics would never hold the audience they do hold, were it not that the vast majority of people have in themselves what William James has called a "mystical germ" which makes response to their message.
>
> *C.F.E. Spurgeon, Mysticism in English Literature, MEL pp.5–6*

This is the point – the mystic faculty is the heritage of everyone, whoever they are. Undeveloped as it may be in the majority, or present only in its most elementary form, everyone has the capacity to develop experience of the divine. As a result, mystic teachings strike a chord deep in the hearts of many.

Mystical experience, then, is universal. Yet, when expressed or described, it takes on the colour of the culture, traditions and language of the individual. As the renowned Arabic and Persian scholar, R.A. Nicholson, observed:

> It may be said, truly enough, that all mystical experiences ultimately meet in a single point; but that point assumes widely different aspects according to the mystic's religion, race and temperament, while the converging lines of approach admit of almost infinite variety.
>
> *R.A. Nicholson, Mystics of Islam, MOI p.2*

To seek out and present indications of this mysticism in the religious and cultural traditions of the world, past and present, is the intention of this *Treasury*. To set the scene for this exploration, it will be useful to review the religions and traditions which have formed the basis of this work.

1.2 Sumerian and Mesopotamian Spirituality

Among the earliest civilizations known to modern man is the Sumerian of Mesopotamia, located in the fertile crescent between the twin rivers of the Tigris and the Euphrates, 500 miles and more to the east of Jerusalem and Palestine, in what is now Iraq. Dating from the third and fourth millennia BCE, the Sumerians were the first civilization to have left written remains. Archaeological excavations from all over the Middle East have revealed hundreds of thousands of inscribed clay tablets, from the Sumerian, Assyrian, Akkadian, Babylonian, Chaldean, Hittite and the various Semitic cultures and subcultures which rose and flourished in what are now Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Kuwait and other Middle Eastern countries. Details of great empires of the past and even chronological lists of kings have been discovered at the sites of ancient city states such as Uruk, Kish, Ur, Nineveh, Nippur, Lagash and others.

The vast majority of these tablets relate to the thriving business activities of the period. Invoices, quotations, procurement lists, shipping documents, letters and so on are all represented. All manner of goods, including significant quantities of building materials, minerals and metals of various kinds appear to have travelled between city states far in the north and dominions many hundreds of miles to the south in what are now southern Iraq and the Persian Gulf. There are even instances of sharp practice, short-shipping, complaints concerning inferior products, goods not precisely like those seen and ordered, and other such things that have always been a part of human commerce.

But among these tablets are also those of a more literary nature – psalms, poems and epic legends, including the famous *Epic of Gilgamesh,* together with scientific, historical and religious texts. The earliest of these tablets are written in hieroglyphics, analogous to the script of the ancient Egyptians, but the vast majority are written in the later cuneiform (wedge-shaped) characters, developed and probably originated by the Sumerians, and adopted by most of the people of the ancient Middle East. The deciphering of these scripts and languages long buried in the sands has exercised some of the best archaeological and linguistic minds of the last century and a half, though there still remain many differences of scholarly opinion. To someone with an interest in such things, the uncovering of these ancient cities, often revealing a multitude of personal details regarding individual lives lived so long ago, has a fascinating quality. But perhaps of the greatest interest in the present context are those texts that provide an insight into the background of biblical literature.

These ancient peoples shared a pantheon of gods whose names and characters changed and evolved as culture succeeded culture. Later on, some of them are even found – transmuted and transformed, having imbibed the colour of local culture – among the gods of the Hindus and the ancient Greeks. Many

temples dedicated to these Mesopotamian deities have been discovered, together with considerable religious literature, from which it is clear that their religious and spiritual beliefs profoundly influenced the peoples of the Middle East, including the Hebrews and the Greeks. Indeed, many of their concepts still pervade the modern world through their influence on Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Embedded in the extensive Mesopotamian mythology are indications that a mystic understanding was not far away, and antecedents are found of later and more familiar mystical traditions. For the Sumerians, the father of the gods was *Anu,* the first-born of the primeval Sea, equivalent perhaps to the divine Essence. *Anu* gave birth to *Enlil,* as in the Sumerian hymn:

> The spirit of the Word of *Anu* is *Enlil.*
>
> *Sumerian Psalms I:38–41, SBPL p.24*

Hence, archaeologist and author N.K. Sandars comments, "*Enlil* is power in action, where *Anu* is power in being."[1] This is the difference between the Creative Word and the Supreme Being of later mystical expression. In Sumerian mythology, *Enlil* is both a creative and a destructive power, as indeed is the Word, which underlies all activity in the creation – forming or dissolving.

Also in the Sumerian pantheon is *Enki,* the god of wisdom, he whose "particular element was the sweet waters bringing life to the land".[2] He was a benign being and a peacemaker, "lord of wisdom who lives in the deep … sometimes called the son of *Anu,* 'Begotten in his own image … of broad understanding and mighty strength.' He was also in a particular degree the creator and benefactor of mankind."[3] In Sumerian mythology, *Enki* is the dispenser of the Water of Life or the Plant or Bread of Life, provided by *Anu,* which brings the dead to life, bestowing immortality. It is probably *Enki* who is depicted on Sumerian pottery, carrying an overflowing vase of the Water of Life.

The parallels here to later mystical expression are unmistakable. Father, Word, Wisdom, son, dispenser of the Plant of Life and the Water of Life, begotten in the image of God, creator and benefactor of mankind – all these are familiar themes in mystic teachings. Mystics draw their inspiration and knowledge direct from God within themselves, but they speak in the language and idiom of the times, explaining the real meaning hidden within contemporary religious beliefs and sacred writings.

In the early Mesopotamian myths are also found precursors to biblical legends. It seems, for instance, that there was a flood of unprecedented proportions in the ancient Middle East, probably in the low-lying lands between the Tigris and the Euphrates, for legendary accounts of a deluge are found among these ancient texts. The Sumerian counterpart of Noah was called Ziusudra, which means 'he saw life', while the corresponding Old Babylonian hero was named Attrahasis.

Also present in these ancient texts are the first extant occurrences of metaphors that were used repeatedly in later times with specifically mystical meanings. The Plant or Tree of Life and the River (of Living Water), for example, running out of Eden are found in *Genesis*, but they were common themes in Middle Eastern mythology long before any biblical books were compiled.

In the story of the goddess Inanna's descent to the underworld, Inanna, foretelling her own death, instructs her faithful messenger, Ninshubur, to seek help from *Enki*, god of wisdom, in order that she may be resurrected from death:

> Father *Enki*, the lord of wisdom
> who knows the Plant of Life,
> who knows the Water of Life –
> He will surely bring me back to life.
> *Inanna's Descent II:65–67, SLW pp.297, 307; cf. KTL p.33, SMS p.90*

Inanna does indeed lose her life when the "seven judges", the *Anunnaki*, gaze at her with the "eyes of death", her corpse being subsequently impaled upon a stake. But *Enki* lives up to the faith Inanna had placed in him, sending to the rescue two creatures of his own fashioning with instructions on how to revive her corpse:

> Sixty times the Plant of Life
> and sixty times the Water of Life sprinkle upon it:
> Verily, *Inanna* will arise.
> *Inanna's Descent II:244–45, SLW pp.301, 310; cf. KTL p.33, SMS p.94*

This they do, and Inanna is resurrected and ascends from the nether world.

The Plant or "Bread of Life" also appears in the *Myth of Adapa*, precursor to the Hebrew Adam. *Anu*, father of the gods, offers Adapa immortality through the "Bread of Life" and the "Water of Life", which he keeps in the highest heaven. But, in the story, Adapa has been advised by his creator, *Ea (Enki)*, to refuse the gifts, for *Ea*, through envy, did not wish Adapa to gain immortality:

> The Bread of Life they placed before him,
> but he did not eat.
> The Water of Life they placed before him,
> but he did not drink.
> *Myth of Adapa II:63–65, SVS p.194; cf. ABE p.98, KTL p.34, MRS p.181*

At Adapa's refusal, *Anu* is angry and punishes him – and through him all mankind – with disease and tribulation. The fall of Adapa is clearly a precursor to the Hebrew story of Adam, although in the characteristically inconsistent nature of mythology, *Ea* or *Enki*, usually the saviour, is here the betrayer of mankind.

Though the legends of Inanna, Adapa and others have been reconstructed with reasonable completeness, many other Sumerian legends are preserved only as fragments or hints of a fuller story, long since lost. Images of some of these are found on pottery and other artefacts. A Sumerian roll cylinder preserved in the British Museum, for example, shows a woman and a man seated before a tree. The man, like Adapa, wears the horned headdress of a god or deified man, and behind the woman stands a serpent. The picture is clearly that of the first temptation of man, leading to the Fall. Images of this kind remained traditional long after Sumerian times. Among the painted pottery of Susa, an important Persian city of Sassanian times (224–651 CE), are designs of the Tree of Life around which is coiled a serpent, and of a naked woman, behind whom stands a serpent.[4]

In another Sumerian text, the Tree of Life is depicted as a *kishkanu* tree growing near streams of life flowing in paradise. Here, there is a double meaning, for Eridu, cultic centre of *Enki,* was a major city in southern Sumeria and *kishkanu* trees were indeed grown in the temple groves for their healing properties:

> In Eridu there is a black *kishkanu* tree,
> growing in a pure place;
> Its appearance is lapis lazuli,
> erected on the *Apsū.*
> *Enki* (lord of wisdom), when walking there,
> fills Eridu with abundance.
>
> In the resting place is the chamber of Nammu.
> In its holy temple there is a grove,
> casting its shadow, wherein no man may enter.
> In the midst are the Sun god and the Sovereign of heaven,
> in between the river with its two mouths.
>
> *Sumerian Text, CTB XVI:46–47; cf. DES pp.200–3, KTL pp.5–6*

Enki, walking in the garden, filling it with abundance, in which grows the Tree of Healing or the Tree of Life is seemingly a precursor to later old Semitic garden of Eden myths, as in *Genesis.* It is a part of the mythological milieu from which *Genesis* originated. Among the ancient Mesopotamian epics and legends are passages that suggest that parts of these ancient myths may at one time have been allegories of mystic truths. In one episode from the Sumerian *Epic of Gilgamesh,* one of the most long-lived of all great epic adventures, the semidivine hero, Gilgamesh, son of a goddess and a priest, said to be three parts god and one part man (symbolic perhaps of man's divine potentiality) goes in search of wisdom and immortality. On his travels, he journeys through passes and mountains (the inner heavens), overpowering and killing lions (human imperfections) that dance in the moonlight, coming at last to a garden of trees bearing jewelled

fruit (the eternal realm), another early intimation of the *Genesis* story. Such incidents and descriptions could easily have been metaphors for aspects of the inner journey of the soul to God. Part of the description of what must surely be the sacred Vine, the Tree of Life planted in Eden, reads:

> Like carnelian are the fruit it bears,
> all hung about with tendrils.
> Fair to gaze upon, lapis lazuli the foliage is,
> and the fruit it bears, desirable to the eye.
> *Epic of Gilgamesh IX:5.48–51; cf. EGT p.43, KTL p.7*

Later in this episode, Gilgamesh finds the Plant of Immortality – the Herb of Life – at the Spring or Fountain of Youth. These expressions have all been used as metaphors for the Word, the Power or Medicine that does indeed bestow immortality. In fact, Gilgamesh finds the Plant of Life on the sea bed, symbolic perhaps of this world as the floor of creation. Following the traditional method of pearl divers, he reaches the sea floor by attaching stones to his feet, and collects the Plant. But, on his homeward journey, encountering a pool of cool water, he goes for a swim and, while his attention is distracted, a serpent, attracted by the fragrance of the Plant, rises up from the water and snatches it. Bearing in mind the pearl-diving technique used by Gilgamesh, it is possible that the Plant of Immortality was also understood as a pearl, the pearl of wisdom, as in the gnostic poem of early Christian times, the *Robe of Glory*, and many other places in ancient spiritual literature. The serpent was certainly associated with gemstones because the skeletons of snakes, possibly dating from Assyrian times, have been found buried in pots along with a small gem, often a tiny turquoise.[5]

Themes common to later mystical literature are also present in other Mesopotamian religious texts. Images among the liturgies associated with the Mesopotamian cult of Tammuz, god of vegetation, are later found in Christian and Manichaean texts, where the ship of the Saviour ferries souls back to God. Thus, a Tammuz text reads:

> A ship of joy is your ship,
> a ship loaded with treasures is your ship.
> *Tammuz Liturgies, DNP pp.128, 130, TLV pp.424–25; cf. MEM p.100*

And likewise in an Assyrian incantation:

> The rope of the ship
> is at the quay of Peace;
> The rope of the ship
> is at the quay of Life.
> *Assyrian Text, KAR III 196(VAT 8869):51–52 p.70, KMI4 pp.68–69, MEM p.102*

Compare these with a later Manichaean psalm, where the meaning is specifically mystical:

> The ship of Jesus has come to port,
> laden with garlands and gay palms.
> It is Jesus who steers it,
> he will put in for us until we embark.
> Let us also make ourselves pure
> that we may make our voyage....
> The ship of Jesus will make its way up to the Height.
> It will bring its cargo to the shore,
> and return for them that are left behind....
>
> He will bring them (safely)
> to the harbour of the immortals.
> It is laden with garlands
> and gay palms for ever and ever.
>
> *Manichaean Psalm Book, MPB pp.151–52*

Or with the writings of the fourth-century Christian, Ephraim Syrus, addressing the blessed soul who has steered his 'ship of light', his "glorious tree", into the "harbour of Life". Or perhaps the "skilful shipmaster" is Jesus on board whose ship the soul has sailed on the "glorious Tree (of Life)" into the "harbour of Life":

> O skilful shipmaster,
> you who have conquered the raging sea,
> your glorious tree has come to the harbour of Life....
> Blessed be he who has been a shipmaster for his soul,
> who has discovered and preserved his treasure.
>
> *Ephraim Syrus, ESHS4 601:15; cf. MEM p.98*

It is not suggested that, in the form in which archaeologists have found them, the Mesopotamian writings are specifically mystical – only that mystical elements were present in Mesopotamian religion at that time. Perhaps such elements represented only hopes and vague religious aspirations to which later mystics gave substance as mystical realities that could be experienced. Or maybe there had been mystics who had used these metaphors, which later became embedded in cultural and religious myths, the result of a decline in spiritual vision after the departure of the mystic.

But mystics always seem to have been present, in every time and culture. Maybe they are a part of the natural economy, to provide spiritual leaven in the darkness of material existence, to guide those souls seeking spiritual assistance.

Whether or not mystics are remembered in history depends upon the religious and cultural atmosphere of their time and place. Moreover, there is no reason why mystics should have left any written record or should even have been literate. They would have been like the people around them. Literacy, after all, can also be understood as a part of the process of crystallization of material life from a more spiritual condition. Civilization is a materialization that requires literacy, record keeping, commerce, written communication and all those material things that mystics say hold the soul captive in this world.

1.3 Zarathushtra and Zoroastrianism

Zarathushtra Spitamā was born at a time when the ancient Aryan-speaking people were spreading their influence and their language both west and east of their Middle Eastern homeland. According to one tradition, he was the third of five sons born to a devout and learned man, Pourushaspa, and his wife, Dughdhōvā.

Zarathushtra's language was Avestan, the most ancient of the Iranian branch of Indo-European languages spoken in Bactria, corresponding in present times to Tajikistan and northern Afghanistan. Zarathushtra is his Avestan name, Spitamā his family name, and the Greeks later called him Zoroaster. In his name, the Zoroastrian or Parsee religion was founded, becoming the main religion of ancient Persia. And from his teaching, there is good reason to believe that he was a mystic and a great spiritual teacher. Certainly, the much later Iranian mystic, Mānī (*c.*216–276), taught that Zarathushtra had been a Saviour of the highest order. Some of the ancient writers said that Zarathushtra was the disciple of Pythagoras, one of the earliest known of the Greek mystics. Others have suggested that Zarathushtra was known in India as the Buddha, and that the two great sages were the same person. From a study of the dates, these suggestions seem implausible, but it demonstrates that the message of these great spiritual teachers has been held by some to be more or less the same.

.Zarathushtra was almost certainly born in ancient Iran; but like many great mystics, his actual place and date of birth are a matter of debate. It was formerly believed that he was born in Rae, though some modern scholars believe that his place of birth was probably Amvi, in the district of Uramiah. Others say that he was born in Azerbaijan, to the west of Media.

Classical writers such as Xanthus of Lydia (C5th BCE), Plato (*c.*427–347 BCE), Pliny the Elder (23–79 CE) and Plutarch (*c.*46–119 CE) date him variously between 6000 and 1000 BCE, but modern scholars, by a comparative analysis of his language and various historical references in the legends concerning his life, generally place him between 1200 BCE and 550 BCE. This is endorsed to some extent by Pahlavi (Middle Persian) writers on Zoroastrianism, during the period of Sassanian rule (224–651 CE), who say that he lived about 300 years before Alexander the Great, during the seventh century BCE.

On the other hand, the Avestan language of Zarathushtra's *Gāthās* is very similar to Sanskrit, seeming to be more or less contemporary with the oldest stratum of Vedic literature, especially that of the *Ṛig Veda*, though the character alphabets used are different. In fact, since some of the words and grammatical forms used by Zarathushtra had become obsolete by Vedic times, the *Gāthās* are possibly slightly earlier than the *Ṛig Veda*. This would date Zarathushtra to as far back as 1200 to 1500 BCE or even earlier, the approximate dates commonly assigned to the *Ṛig Veda*.

Since nothing of any early date or historical reliability exists, details concerning Zarathushtra's life are largely a matter of legend and tradition. In common with many holy men and women of the past, miracle stories abound concerning his birth, infancy and later life. Some accord him a conventional human birth and parentage. Others relate that the glory of *Ahurā Mazdā*, together with the eternal spirit and material substance of Zarathushtra, entered the womb of his mother when she was only fifteen, and that he, like Jesus, came into this world by a virgin birth. The Roman historian, Pliny, writes in his *Natural History*:

> It is recorded of Zoroaster that he was the only human being who ever laughed on the same day that he was born. We hear, too, that his brain throbbed so powerfully as to dislodge a hand when laid upon his head, this foretelling his future wisdom.
>
> *Pliny the Elder, Natural History VII:72, NH2 p.552; cf. NH2 p.553*

According to tradition, at the age of fifteen, accompanied by a few faithful companions, Zarathushtra left his parental home in search of enlightenment. Coming to the wide river Abahi, there being neither bridge nor boat, he prayed for divine guidance on how to reach the other side. Then, setting out, armed only with his faith, he and his companions walked on the water, safely reaching the other side.

From this time, and prior to his ministry, Zarathushtra passed a further fifteen years living in solitude on the mountain of Ushidaren, spending his time in meditation. Wrestling with himself, it is said that he conquered his desires and lower self. Achieving mystic union with the supreme Lord of light and love, *Ahurā Mazdā*, he received a divine mandate to share his revelation.

Pointing out that Zarathushtra did not teach asceticism and flight from worldly life to the forests or mountains, some commentators have suggested that the mountain is actually allegorical, referring to the inner heights reached by the soul in mystic transport. They note that the name of the mountain, Ushidaren, literally means 'consciousness affording'. In the mystical expression of later Judaism, Christianity, Manichaeism, Mandaeanism and the Middle East, mountains are a common metaphor for the inner regions of the soul.

Traditionally, Zarathushtra is believed to have begun his ministry at around the age of thirty. To begin with, he had very few followers, but at the age of

forty-two, King Vishtaspa and his court at Bactria, a small province in eastern Iran, became his disciples, after which his teachings were more readily accepted. He is said to have died at the age of seventy-seven.

The teachings of Zarathushtra were well known throughout the Middle East in ancient times. Plato mentions him in *Alcibiadēs;* the Magi, Zoroastrian sages, were said to have been present at the birth of Jesus; the Greek philosophers Eudoxus (*c*.406–355 BCE), Aristotle (384–322 BCE), Hermippus of Smyrna (C3rd BCE) and Xanthus of Lydia are all said to have written of him; Plutarch and the early Christian fathers, Clement of Alexandria (*c*.150–215 CE) and Hippolytus (*fl*.210–236 CE), all say on the authority of the Greek historian, Diodorus of Eretria (C1st BCE) and Aristoxenus, a disciple of Aristotle, that Zarathushtra had been a disciple of Pythagoras, though the two were probably separated in time by many centuries.

Although a number of ancient Zoroastrian texts still exist, the only surviving writings that can be traced to Zarathushtra himself are the *Gāthās,* comprising only a slim volume. Tradition, however, credits him with having been a prolific writer. Pliny states that the great philosopher, Hermippus, had read some two million verses composed by Zarathushtra, while Zoroastrian tradition credits him with twenty-one books or *nasks.* Apart from the *Gāthās,* extant Zoroastrian religious writings are essentially later commentaries, interpretations or religious writings of various kinds. There is thus considerable confusion as to what Zarathushtra actually taught. Moreover, the Avestan language in which the *Gāthās* are written is so old that there is disagreement among scholars as to the meaning of many of the passages. Often, there are as many translations and interpretations of a particular *gāthā* as there are translators, the rendering generally reflecting the translator's own personal background and bias.

According to traditional Zoroastrianism, Zarathushtra taught the existence of two gods – one evil and the other good. But a number of scholars – Zoroastrian and otherwise – have pointed out that Zarathushtra himself was very clear that the two spirits *(mainyu)* of which he speaks are both creations of the supreme Lord, *Ahurā Mazdā.* In fact, *Ahurā* means Lord of Life and – according to I.J.S. Taraporewala – *Mazdā* means the Creator of Matter, emphasizing that both life and matter, light and darkness, good and evil, are the creation of the Supreme:

> Now to eager listeners will I speak
>   of the two *mainyu, Mazdā* did create....
> That you, grown perfect, may attain His Light....
>
> The first created were these *mainyu,* two:
>   as twin co-workers they manifest themselves;
> Yet in each thought and word and deed these two
>   forever disagree: one's good, the other's bad.

And of these two, the wise do choose aright,
while the unwise choose not thus – and go astray.

And when together these two *mainyu*
did foregather at creation's early dawn,
one made life *(gaya)*, the other, death *(ajyāitī)*;
And thus creation's purpose is achieved:
Darkness of mind for the followers of Untruth *(dregvānts)*,
brightness of mind for the followers of Truth *(ashāvants)*.
Of these two *mainyu*, the worldly man *(dregvānt)*
will always choose performing evil deeds,
while the spiritual man will choose the Truth.

He who would clothe himself in imperishable light,
He who would satisfy the Lord *Ahurā*:
Let him through deeds of Truth choose *Mazdā*'s Way.

Zarathushtra, Yasna 30:1, 3–5; cf. DSZ pp.127, 136, 140, 144

Here, Zarathushtra makes it clear that the two powers, spirits or *mainyu* are creations of the one Lord, *Ahurā Mazdā*.

It is apparent from his writings that Zarathushtra taught the practice of the mystic Word, the divine creative Power which he called the *Manthrā, Vohu Manō, Sraosha* and by other names. Further evidence of this comes from the third-century Iranian mystic, Mānī, upon whose teachings the religion of Manichaeism was founded. Considerably more of Zarathushtra's teachings would have been extant then than nowadays, and Mānī taught that the Buddha, Jesus, Zarathushtra and others had all been Saviours or perfect Masters, but that a living person required a living Saviour in order to attain salvation. From the limited history available, it seems that Mānī probably had disciples stretching from India to Rome, with cultural backgrounds from Buddhism, Christianity and Zoroastrianism. It was therefore natural for him to explain the teachings of all three of these great mystics.

Like all mystics, Zarathushtra taught that God is formless and intangible. As such, although He is beyond all attributes, He can only be described by His characteristics or aspects. Zarathushtra mentions six of these in particular, and though the term is not used in the *Gāthās*, these six came to be known as the *Ameshā Spentās* or Holy Immortals in later Zoroastrianism. They are:

Ashā	The Law, Command or Order of God; the divine will, the mystic Truth
Vohu Manō	The Primal Mind or Intelligence of God
Xshathrā	The Power and Might of God
Ārmaiti	Divine devotion and faith

Haurvatāt	Perfection
Ameretatāt	Immortality

While Zarathushtra's simple teachings, as found in the *Gāthās*, are comparable to those of many other mystics, Zoroastrianism became somewhat different in later ages. Following the path of most religions, it absorbed influences, beliefs and practices from its surroundings and background. After Zarathushtra's departure, some of the older Iranian deities were introduced into the belief system, including the god *Mithra*, appearing in the Indian *Vedas* as *Mitra*. Other influences, external to Persia, also found their way into the Zoroastrian religious tradition in the course of its development.

Mithra, incidentally, is of considerable interest because the religion of Mithraism, formed around his worship, not only became one of the foremost religions of the Roman Empire, especially of Roman garrisons abroad, but was also a major rival to Christianity, with some of the Mithraic rituals and even beliefs being incorporated into Christianity. The twenty-fifth of December, for example, was actually the date on which the Romans celebrated the birthday of *Mithra*, and was adopted as a convenience by the early Christians as the birthday of Jesus since it was a public holiday in the Roman Empire.

In the absence of historical records, it is uncertain whether or not Zarathushtra left a successor; there is, however, a verse that seems to indicate that he did:

> O Frashoshtra, gather up the devotees,
> O Hvōgvā, lead them on to higher realms,
> to light eternal, as we both wish –
> Where *Ārmaiti* (Devotion) dwells close-knit to Truth *(Ashā)*,
> where *Xshathrā* (Might, Majesty) reigns supreme,
> gained through His First Mind *(Vohu Manō)*,
> where *Mazdā Ahurā* in His glory shines.
>
> *Zarathushtra, Yasna 46:16; cf. DSZ p.625*

Frashoshtra Hvōgvā was a minister at the court of Vishtaspa, and his brother Jāmāspa, to whom the next verse in this *gāthā* is addressed, was prime minister. Their sister, Havovi, was said to have been married to Zarathushtra. Zarathushtra appears to be instructing Frashoshtra to take care of his disciples, and to lead them on the spiritual path.

As observed, the meaning of Zarathushtra's *Gāthās* is a matter of scholarly debate, but some considerable help can be derived from a study of the similarities between Avestan and Sanskrit. The two are closely related members of the Indo-European group of languages. In fact, according to I.J.S. Taraporewala of Bombay, a Gathic stanza can be transposed into Sanskrit, especially the Sanskrit of the *Ṛig Veda*, with only minor changes. He has also demonstrated that the

metre of the *Ahunavaiti Gāthā*, a collection of verses well known to all Zoroastrians, bears a remarkable resemblance to that of the *Gāyatrī*, familiar to students of the *Ṛig Veda*. All this suggests that Zarathushtra and the earliest writers of the *Ṛig Veda* were more or less contemporary. There are also significant parallels between Avestan and Sanskrit. For example:

Gathic Avestan		***Sanskrit***	
ameretatāt	immortality	*amartyatā*	immortality
mainyu	spirit, spiritual power	*manyu*	spirit, mind, ardour, zeal, passion
manthrā	word	*mantra*	sacred text or speech a prayer, a song of praise
xshathrā	power	*kshatra*	power, might

Certain aspects of the *Gāthās* also have their counterparts in the *Vedas*. *Ashā*, for instance, meaning Truth and divine Order in its highest and most mystic sense, is probably derived from the same root as the Vedic, *Ṛita*, where the meaning is very much the same. Even the term *Ahurā*, used by Zarathushtra for the Supreme Being, is found in the *Vedas* as one of a group of benevolent deities known as the *asuras*.

Zoroastrian sacred literature consists of three main divisions, classifiable by their language. Firstly, there is the *Avestā*, being Avestan texts. This includes the *Gāthās* as a small section among some considerably later material, most of which was written during the period of Achaemenian rule (559–331 BCE) or perhaps in the centuries immediately after. The *Avestā* is divided into a number of *nasks* (divisions or books). The foremost of these *nasks* is the *Yasna*, meaning 'sacrifice', or 'offering with prayers' or 'worship'. This is the main liturgical book in the collection, comprising seventy-two chapters, centred on seventeen chapters containing the *Gāthās*, and another old and smaller section, the *Yasna Haptanghāiti*, consisting of seven chapters. The remaining body of the book is made up largely of writings of praise and prayer.

As the only extant writings of Zarathushtra, the *Gāthās* hold the key when it comes to determining his actual teachings. However, there are many manuscripts of the *Gāthās* in existence, some originating in Persia and some in India, the latter being based upon Iranian originals. And none of these is older than the fourteenth century CE. There is also considerable variation between them and, as with practically all ancient writings, scholars have edited together whatever seemed the most reliable portions from separate manuscripts. During this process, any passages which remain incomprehensible, or which the editor feels are incorrect, are usually changed or emended until they make sense. The resulting 'critical edition' is then the subject of translation. In practice, there is usually considerable room for debate over which is the more correct reading, and a

number of critical editions of the *Gāthās* have been prepared by various groups of scholars.

It is not possible, therefore, to ascertain how faithful these critical editions of the *Gāthās* are to Zarathushtra's original words, though it can be reasonably presumed that they have not have come down to present times unscathed. They have been subject to 4000 years or so of copyists' errors, as well as ample opportunities for editing by interested parties within the Zoroastrian religion, together with the processes involved in the preparation of critical editions.

The second most significant *nask* or book of the *Avestā* is the *Visprat*, resembling the *Yasna* in language and form and consisting of twenty-four chapters. It is a book of invocations and offerings to *vīspe ratavō* (all the lords), from which the *nask* takes its name. Thirdly, there is the *Yasht* (from the Avestan *yeshti*, meaning 'worship by praise'), containing twenty-one hymns in praise of the various deities or 'worshipful ones *(yazata)*' of the Zoroastrian pantheon such as *Mithra* and others. Many of the deities invoked are actually Indo-Iranian in origin, and the content of some of the hymns pre-dates Zarathushtra, though written in a later dialect. The *Khorda Avestā* follows, consisting of short prayers; then there is the *Vidēvdāt* (*lit.* law against demons), a priestly manual in twenty-two chapters, and the *Hadhōkht Nask* (*lit.* section containing sayings), which describes what happens to the soul after death. Additionally, there are fragments from a number of other *nasks* of the *Avestā* which are no longer extant. The *Zand-Avestā* refers to the *Avestā*, together with various traditional interpretative commentaries in the original Avestan, *Zand* being a Pahlavi word, meaning 'commentary'.

It is generally believed that the *Avestā*, like many ancient texts, was at first transmitted orally and memorized, since the spoken or audible word *(manthrā)* was understood to contain more power than the written word. However, Zarathushtra's *Gāthās* indicate that his understanding of the *Manthrā* was that of the Creative Word, which is indeed more powerful than the written word. As the religion developed, Zarathushtra's insistence on the importance of the audible – but mystic – Word was probably misunderstood to mean the spoken rather than the written word.

The script in which Avestan was written was not created until the fourth century CE, by which time most of the Avestan works were lost, including a large number of Zarathushtra's *Gāthās*. This script was derived from the late Sassanid script devised for Pahlavi (literary Middle Persian). It seems fairly certain, therefore, that the *Avestā* itself was not committed to writing until late in the period of Sassanid rule, maybe two millennia after the time of Zarathushtra. During the Sassanid era, the *Avestā* was also re-edited and re-arranged three times, the final redaction opting for an arrangement into twenty-one *nasks* or books, corresponding to the twenty-one words of the sacred Zoroastrian prayer, the *Ahuna Vairya*.

The second main division of Zoroastrian texts consists of the Pahlavi books originating mainly during the Sassanian era, which brought a revival of both

material and spiritual interests to Zoroastrianism. Pahlavi was the language of Iran at that time, Avestan having become largely unintelligible to the general population. Further additions to this literature seem to have been made as late as the end of eleventh century CE. The Pahlavi literature is of two kinds: firstly, translations of the *Avestā,* intermingled with commentary; secondly, a considerable volume of independent writings on matters of the religion. It is clear, however, from the *Dēnkart,* a ninth-century summary of the twenty-one *nasks,* that not all of the Pahlavi *Avestā* has survived. Much of the early material, both of the Avestan and of the Pahlavi material that was written during the Sassanian period, has been lost.

By the time of the Pahlavi writers and translators, the simple mystic teachings of Zarathushtra were well submerged beneath layers of religious belief introduced from other quarters. Scholars have also pointed out that the Pahlavi translators did not fully understand some of the grammatical constructions of ancient Avestan. This, together with the beliefs, practices and prejudices of the time, resulted in renderings that reflected the point of view of the period. The Pahlavi translations of the Avestan material, however, are of considerable interest, not least because they preserve much ancient material no longer extant in its Avestan original. Indeed, until as recently as the middle of the twentieth century, all the Western translations and studies of Zarathushtra's original Avestan *Gāthās* were made from the defective Pahlavi translations, giving – at best – a distorted picture of his teachings.

The Pahlavi language itself is the Middle Persian or Iranian language that originated in Iran during the centuries after the fall of the Achaemenian Empire to Alexander the Great (331 BCE), in the time of Darius III. The Achaemenian dynasty was the first long period of rule in the Persian Empire founded by Cyrus the Great (*c.*529 BCE), king of Persia. In its Middle Persian form *(pahlavīg),* Pahlavi was an adjective designating the Parthians, the most prominent ethnic group in Iran during the period of Arsacid rule (247 BCE – 224 CE), as opposed to the Persians *(pārsīg* or modern *fārsī),* the prominent ethnic group of southwest Iran that held power in the Sassanid era (224–651 CE).

Pahlavi was a direct evolution of the Achaemenid style of writing Aramaic, as it existed in the Persian-speaking area of Iran in the period following the end of Achaemenid rule. Like all languages, Pahlavi continued to evolve, becoming the official language of the Sassanian rulers, and the literary language of the period. It survived for some three centuries after their downfall, remaining the language of Iran until the modern Persian alphabet was invented in the seventh century, based on the Arabic script. As well as the wealth of Zoroastrian texts, a large body of religious and mystic literature belonging to the Nestorian Christians and Manichaeans was also written in Pahlavi.

In addition to a number of other minor works, the most well-known of the Zoroastrian Pahlavi books are:

1. The *Bundahishn* (*lit.* primal creation, original creation), a creation story and revelation based upon the Avestan *Dāmdāt Nask*.
2. The *Dēnkart* (*lit.* acts of the religion), an encyclopaedic work on Zoroastrianism, summarizing the contents of the twenty-one *nasks* or books of the *Avestā*, written in the nineth century CE, during a brief Zoroastrian renaissance under Muslim rule.
3. The *Artāk Virāz Nāmak* (*lit.* the book of Saint Virāz), a revelation of heaven and hell.
4. The *Dātastān-i Dēnīk* (*lit.* ordinances of the religion).
5. The Pahlavi *Rivāyat;* a companion volume to the *Dātastān-i Dēnīk.*
6. The *Dātastān-i Mēnūk-i Khrat* (*lit.* ordinances of the spirit of wisdom).
7. The *Shāyist nē-Shāyist* (*lit.* the proper and the improper).
8. The *Shkand-vimānīk Vichār* (*lit.* doubt-dispelling expositions).

The third division of Zoroastrian writings consists of those originating with the Parsee priests, both in Iran and India, dated after the eleventh century and written in more modern Iranian.

The mingling of cultures in the Middle East has left its mark upon the mystical expression and religious beliefs of both the well-known and lesser-known mystical and religious teachings of the last four millennia. Echoes of metaphors used by Zarathushtra in the *Gāthās* can be found not only in the *Vedas* but also in the Jewish Wisdom Literature, in the Jewish mystical tradition known as *Merkavah* (Chariot), among the gnostics of the early Christian era, in the writings of the Mandaeans, in the teachings of Mānī, in the beliefs of the medieval Bogomils, Cathars and Albigensians, in both the canonical and apocryphal literature of early Christianity, and among the later Sufi mystics of Islam.

Zoroastrianism preceded the three other world religions that have emanated from the Middle East – Judaism, Christianity and Islam. It is not surprising to find, therefore, that Zoroastrian doctrines, as well as the original teachings of Zarathushtra, are echoed in these later religions. Zoroastrianism, for instance, teaches resurrection of the body after death; it also teaches the existence of the soul, and of heaven and hell; there is also a Day of Judgment at the end of time when the struggle between good and evil comes to an end. These doctrines are all present in Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Like Christianity, Zoroastrianism also looks forward to the coming of a Saviour. Zoroastrian myths recount that the seed of Zarathushtra is preserved in a lake, and that a virgin, bathing in that lake, will conceive the Saviour. It is therefore possible that the coming of the three Magi (Zoroastrian priests) to the birth of Jesus, according to the gospel story, was an attempt to present Jesus as the Zoroastrian world Saviour.

Among Zoroastrian contributions to Islam are the five daily prayers, also practised by Zoroastrians; the use of water in ablutions and an emphasis on ritual purity, also common to Judaism; the importance of good intention, called in

Arabic, *niyyah,* and comparable with what Zoroastrians call 'good thought'; the Arabic term for paradise *(firdaws),* originally a Persian word stemming from an earlier Avestan origin; the concept of the soul having to cross a bridge of judgment after death, the *Chinvatō Peretū* to Zoroastrians and the *Pul-i Ṣirāṭ* to Muslims; the Muslim belief that the dead can hear for three days after death, originating in the Zoroastrian belief that the soul hovers about for three days before departing for the next world; and even simple superstitions, such as not breathing into fire (*e.g.* not blowing out a candle).

In the *Qur'ān,* Zoroastrians are called *Mājūs,* a term that tended to cover all Iranian religions. Islamic authorities have accepted them as a 'People of the Book', whose religion was a revelation from God, thus qualifying them for protection from the Islamic state and as a people who could not be compelled to convert to Islam. The same applies to Christians and Jews.

Zarathushtra's teachings, as they are presented in the *Gāthās,* were combined with other elements not long after his death. Even as early as Achaemenid times, "The more important forms of Persian belief were blended into a single syncretic religion, and the Zoroastrian priests were compelled to accept a number of heathenish deities."[6] In later times, Greek influences both before and certainly after the fall of the Persian Empire to Alexander in 331 BCE, followed by a succession of Parthian rulers (141 BCE – 224 CE), made the religion of Zoroastrianism into something very different from that which Zarathushtra himself had taught. Even during the restoration of Zoroastrianism as the state religion during Sassanian times (224–651 CE), Zarathushtra's teachings themselves still suffered at the hands of the Pahlavi translators and interpreters.

In its prime, as the state religion of ancient Iran, Zoroastrianism claimed many millions of adherents. During the Achaemenid rule, Zoroastrianism spread throughout Asia Minor and Syria into Central Asia, China and India. Zoroastrians were to be found in North Africa and, in Parthian days, there were Zoroastrians living in Italy. It is thus to be classed as one of the major world religions.

It was the Muslim conquest of Iran, however, that dealt a blow to Zoroastrianism from which it has never recovered. The Muslim onslaught, fiercely resisted by the Sassanians, culminated in 642 in the bloody battle of Nihāvand, to the south of Hamadān, in which an Iranian army of 150,000 is said to have lost 100,000 men to the skilful tactics of an Arab force numbering only 30,000. Following this battle, the Muslims were able to consolidate their position, and with the death of the last Sassanian emperor in 651, their conquest of Iran was complete. The ensuing Muslim rule proved more disastrous to Zoroastrianism that any of the earlier conquests. While the Greeks and Parthians had been largely tolerant of the religious life of those they conquered, the Muslims were bent on conversion by the sword and the extirpation of existing religions. In a short while, Zoroastrianism was all but eliminated, and the remaining followers were largely confined to the oasis of Yazd and the more eastern provinces, far

from the capital and less influenced by Muslim domination. The mid-seventh century also saw the first emigration of Zoroastrians to India, followed a century later, by a second.

Though a widespread religion in ancient times, modern Zoroastrians are estimated to number between 150,000 and 200,000 worldwide, around 75,000 of whom live in India, mostly in the states of Maharashtra and Gujarat, especially Mumbaī, Puṇe and Sūrat. Census information, however, on which these figures are largely based, is unreliable, and actual numbers may vary to some extent. Only about 18,000 Zoroastrians remain in Iran, mostly in Tehran, Kernan and Yazd.[7] In modern Iran, Zarathushtra is known as Zaradusht, and Zoroastrians are called Zaradushtis.

1.4 Judaism

The Hebrew Bible and Other Texts

Like most religions, the beliefs and practices of Judaism are based upon its ancient scriptures and traditions. This means the Bible – a diverse collection of documents written and collected over a long period of time. The Hebrew Bible is divided into three broad categories: the *Torah* (the Law), the Prophets and the Writings. The *Torah* consists of the first five books *(Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers* and *Deuteronomy)*, commonly called the *Pentateuch*. Beginning with a story of the creation, they continue with the early history of Adam and his descendants, and go on to chronicle the history of the Israelites, their exodus from Egypt and their wanderings in the Sinai desert, up to the death of Moses, just before their entry into Canaan.

Traditionally, the authorship of these five books is attributed to Moses, but scholarly analysis reveals that they are actually comprised of five or possibly more separate sources, woven together and stemming from different periods. Firstly, there is the oldest source, originating from the southern kingdom, Judah, which uses *Yahweh* as its name for God, and dates from the ninth or tenth century BCE; secondly, a source from the northern kingdom, Israel – a later composition, but also of great antiquity, using *Elohim* as its name for God. It is likely that these had already been combined by the time the third source, *Deuteronomy*, or most of it, was added – a document compiled during the seventh century, and found in the Temple during the period of Joshua's reforms. Lastly, two priestly documents were added at a time when worship had become more formalized, probably during the Babylonian exile of the sixth century BCE.

Following the *Torah* are the Prophets, subdivided into the Early Prophets and the Later Prophets. The Early Prophets consist of the largely historical books of *Joshua, Judges, 1* and *2 Samuel,* and *1* and *2 Kings*. Although recounting the early history of the Israelites, the chief concerns of these books are with the relationship between the Israelites and God, and in many instances it is impossible

to reconstruct anything like an accurate or chronological history of events, nor was this the intention of the various authors. The period covered is from the time of Joshua, successor to Moses around 1250 BCE, to the sack of Jerusalem and destruction of the Temple in *c.*587/586 BCE by the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, resulting in the Babylonian deportation and exile of the Jews. To begin with, the sources that were compiled into the earliest versions these books, probably during the sixth century BCE, would have circulated as a mixture of written texts and oral tradition.

The Later Prophets comprise the books of Isaiah (*b.c.*765 BCE), Jeremiah (*b.c.*646 BCE), Ezekiel (*fl.c.*593–571 BCE) and the collection of the twelve prophets: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Ḥabakkuk, Zephaniah, Ḥaggai, Zechariah and Malachi, who lived between the eighth and the fifth centuries BCE. The book of Jonah, probably written in the fourth century BCE, is the odd one out in this collection, being a satirical and fantastical story concerning the reluctant prophet, Jonah, who otherwise receives only a passing mention in *2 Kings.*[8]

The Writings (the *Ketuvim* or *Hagiographa*) consist of the Wisdom Literature *(Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Psalms* and the *Song of Songs),* together with *1* and *2 Chronicles, Ezra, Daniel, Ruth, Esther, Lamentations* and *Nehemiah.* It is in the *Psalms* and the Wisdom Literature that some of the most explicitly mystical writing is to be found.

Ancillary to these biblical texts are a number of other interesting books, some historical such as *1* and *2 Maccabees,* while others are in the prophetic tradition, like *Baruch,* the *Sibylline Oracles,* the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs,* and *1, 2* and *3 Enoch.* Two texts, the *Wisdom of Solomon* and the *Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach* (also called *Ecclesiasticus*) belong with the Wisdom Literature, and are particularly remarkable for their mystic content, especially regarding Wisdom (He. *Ḥokhmah,* Gk. *Sophia*) as the divine creative Power.

Early Jewish Mysticism

To appreciate the mystic meaning in the Bible, it is necessary to look deeply into its language and symbolism. The first book, *Genesis,* begins with a dramatic account of the creation through the mystic Utterance or Command of God:

> In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth.
> Now the earth was unformed and void,
>   and darkness was upon the face of the deep,
>   and the spirit of God hovered over the face of the waters.
> And God said, "Let there be light!": and there was light.
> And God saw the light, that it was good;
> And God divided the light from the darkness.
>
> *Genesis 1:1–4, FBM*

From the creation, *Genesis* moves on to the mythic stories of Adam and Eve and the garden of Eden, long understood by mystics as an allegorical portrayal of the primal separation of the soul from God and its imprisonment in the physical universe.

The story continues with the episode of Noah and the great flood, understood mystically as the end of one cosmic age and the birth of another. The ark symbolizes the continuity of life through the cosmic cycles of creation, destruction and re-creation, while Noah is the archetypal Saviour of mankind who carries the potential for life from one age to another.

There is a long-established Jewish tradition of biblical interpretation from a mystical perspective. Jewish commentators since the time of the rabbis, several centuries BCE, discussed the biblical stories and shared their mystical understanding of them. Centuries later, the medieval mystics of the movement known as the Kabbalah also gave complex, symbolic interpretations of biblical texts in order to convey their mystic teachings. They believed that there were several levels of meaning embedded in the Bible, from the literal or contextual to the secret or esoteric. At the deepest level, the entire *Torah* was seen as a spiritual allegory. The stories that pertain to the creation, and the history of the patriarchs and the ancient Israelites, were also understood as allegories of the soul's spiritual journey and evolution.

Jewish mystics, and indeed many Jewish scholars, have not seen themselves as interpreting the Bible. They have seen themselves as unlocking a code to its true meaning. They have believed that the written text of the Bible was never meant to be taken literally, but that it was designed from the outset as a series of hints or codes pointing to an oral tradition or text that carried a more mystical layer of meaning. That is why, for example, the kind of biblical literalness that tries to base every belief on the literal words of the Bible is alien to Judaism.

After the period of the flood, the Bible moves into what can be called early recorded history – the era of the patriarchs and matriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, Leah and Rachel – beginning around 2000 BCE. It relates that God commanded Abraham to journey from Mesopotamia, the "land of his fathers", to the land of Canaan, and tells of God's covenant with him.[9] The covenant between God and Abraham was an agreement that Abraham would worship only the one Lord. In exchange, God promised that a great and mighty people would issue from Abraham, to whom He would bequeath "a land flowing with milk and honey",[10] if they continued to be faithful to Him.

From a mystical viewpoint, worship of the one God (monotheism) is the worship of the unity that is God. Later Jewish commentators have observed that the covenant, which was marked by the rite of circumcision, was Abraham's initiation into the inner spiritual practice of the Holy Name of God,[11] the divine creative Power, which they also called the *Memra* (Utterance), the *Davar* (Word) and the *Logos* (Word). In fact, the term *brit millah,* commonly translated as 'covenant of the circumcision', also means 'covenant of the Name'. Abraham agreed

to teach his descendants this inner worship; in return, God promised to take them to the land of Canaan[12] – the 'promised land', "a land flowing with milk and honey", metaphors for the higher heavenly realms.

Not only is Abraham considered the father of the Jewish religion through his son Isaac and grandson Jacob, but Muslims also trace their lineage to Abraham through his son Ishmael. In fact, since Christianity embraces its Judaic roots, Abraham is regarded as the first patriarch of Christianity as well. Thus, the followers of all three religions share the same heritage.

Jacob, also called Israel,[13] had twelve sons from whom were descended the twelve original tribes of Israel. Initially, they were no more than clans of related families who, through circumstances, moved to Egypt where they were at first treated as welcome visitors. With a change of rulers, however, Egypt eventually became unfriendly to the early Israelites, and they were subjected to forced labour and other hardships. Having endured 200 years in these harsh circumstances, the Bible relates how Moses was sent by God as their liberator. The revelation experienced by Moses when God called him to this task – of the divine Voice issuing from a burning bush that is not consumed[14] – has been interpreted by Jewish mystics as a dramatic and graphic account of God revealing himself in the form of light and sound.[15]

The period of slavery in Egypt and the subsequent exodus mark the Israelites' evolution from a community of tribes and families to a people with an identity and a unique religious orientation. Jewish interpreters throughout the ages, from the first-century Alexandrian, Philo Judaeus, to the Kabbalists of the Middle Ages, have consistently interpreted this story allegorically. Thus, Egypt symbolizes the body, slavery in Egypt is a period of spiritual constriction, the exodus and the forty years of wandering in the desert that followed represent the soul's breaking away from the oppression of worldliness and the beginning of the spiritual journey, and so on. This symbolic and often mystical interpretation of apparently historical events is characteristically Jewish, appearing, for instance, in the Dead Sea Scrolls from the first and second centuries BCE. It is in keeping with the tone of the Bible in which the things that happen to the Israelites are interpreted in the light of their relationship to God. Misfortunes, for instance, are understood as the result of God's anger at their previous misdemeanours. Consequently, it is difficult to tell how much of these stories are historical, and how much they have been allegorized.

During their wanderings in the desert, the Bible recounts that Moses brought his people to the foot of Mount Sinai where he ascended the mountain and communed with God. God entered into a second covenant with the Israelites, a renewal of his covenant with Abraham 600 years earlier. The covenant is symbolized by the Ten Commandments, which Moses carried from the heights of the mountain. Through Moses, God revealed himself to the children of Israel.

Like God's covenant with Abraham, Jewish mystics have taught that this revelation was the experience of God's Holy Name. Climbing the mountain is

an ancient Middle Eastern symbol for ascent to the inner spiritual regions. The true *Torah* or 'revelation' experienced by Moses is thus his inner mystical experience of God, which he tried to convey to the people of Israel. The mystic revelation of God's Name or Word is a theme repeated throughout the Bible – not only in the stories of the patriarchs and Moses, but also in the accounts of the lives and teachings of the prophets who lived in the centuries leading up to the first century CE.

The Bible speaks of the intense relationship between God and the people of Israel. A pattern emerges in which the people lose faith in God, and God proves His love and protection through a miracle. For although they attested belief in God, whom they called *Yahweh* (Jehovah), meaning the 'One who is, was and will be', they would consistently lose faith and begin worshipping the deities of the peoples surrounding them. Even while Moses was at the top of Mount Sinai receiving the revelation of the Ten Commandments, the Israelites waiting at the foot of the mountain fashioned a golden calf to worship.

The Ten Commandments, in Hebrew called the 'tablets of the covenant' (since they embodied the essence of God's covenant with Abraham as renewed during the time of Moses), were placed in a special 'ark of the covenant' which travelled with the Israelites in a mobile sanctuary called the 'tent of the meeting'. According to the Bible story, a cloud of God's glory would hover over the tent, guiding the Israelites on their journeys. The tent and the ark within it were a symbol of God's presence in their midst wherever they journeyed.

Possession of the ark of the covenant gave the Israelites a centre, a focus for their trust in God. Even when they eventually entered the land of Canaan, the ark was carried with them into battle. Eventually, when the Temple was built in Jerusalem, this ark and the tablets within it were kept in the innermost sanctum, the holy of holies. In fact, the Temple was originally conceived as the permanent tent of the meeting.

In the biblical account, Moses dies just before entering Canaan, and is succeeded by the prophet Joshua who leads the people into the promised land. After Joshua, there is a succession of religious judges and prophets who guide the people spiritually and morally. The next thousand years reflect the efforts of the prophets to keep the people loyal to the worship of *Yahweh* alone. But, as at Sinai, the people consistently stray to the worship and cultic practices of local Canaanite deities. So although the worship of *Yahweh* was the official religion, the worship of other gods continued simultaneously throughout, with little exception.

Prophecy was a phenomenon known and documented in most ancient Middle Eastern societies. In addition to Abraham and Moses, other biblical prophets include Samuel, Elijah and Elisha, followed later by Isaiah, Joel, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. These prophets also selected the temporal leaders of the people. It is Samuel, for instance, who anoints Saul as the first king of Israel, later anointing David as Saul's successor. The anointing signified the alighting of God's will upon an individual.

David himself, though not a prophet but a king, functioned as a kind of spiritual leader. The Bible relates that when he was anointed by Samuel, the "Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward,"[16] adding several times elsewhere that "the Lord was with him,"[17] and repeatedly mentioning David's consultations with God during his wars and various struggles. David was also an accomplished musician, and a late tradition ascribes many of the psalms to him, also crediting him with organizing the Temple choirs. The events of David's life in the tenth century BCE are the earliest biblical information that can be verified historically. He conquered the lands around him, including the city of Jebus (later called Jerusalem), which he made into his capital.

The Temple in Jerusalem was built by David's son, King Solomon. According to tradition, Solomon was a man of great wisdom, and is regarded as the author of the *Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes* and *Proverbs,* which form part of the mystical Wisdom Literature. After Solomon's death, the kingdom established by David split into two. The larger kingdom of Israel was made up of the ten tribes who had settled in the northern area of Samaria, and the southern kingdom of Judah comprised the two tribes in the area near Jerusalem and the Judaean desert.

During the period of the monarchies, from the ninth century BCE onwards, prophets like Elijah and Isaiah recounted their experiences of God's Holy Name, also warning the people that other nations would conquer them unless they returned to the ways of the covenant and gave up their immoral behaviour. According to *2 Kings,* at Elijah's death he ascended to heaven in a "chariot of fire" or light.[18] This description of his ascent became an important inspiration for later Jewish mystic seekers, who took the account metaphorically, as the ascent of the soul into the inner heavens.

The prophet Jeremiah in the seventh and sixth centuries BCE lived through the Babylonian exile of both Jewish kingdoms, instructing the people to accept their fate and prophesying that it would last only seventy years. He also denounced the corrupt Temple practices and hypocrisy of the many false prophets. He prophesied that God would create a new covenant to be written in the hearts of the Israelites. They would know it in their innermost beings. This covenant seems to be a reference to the universal spiritual path present within everyone.

Ezekiel's prophecies were directed to the children of Israel at the time of their exile from Judaea in the sixth century BCE. His teachings are dramatic and sensational, particularly the allegories of the valley of dry bones that come to life, and of the fantastic chariot made of six beings – part human, part animal, part angel – vibrating with lights, colours and sounds, in which he ascended to the inner celestial regions, finally reaching the throne of God. Like Elijah's ascent, Ezekiel's vision of the chariot was to serve as a model for Jewish mystics for centuries afterwards.

Much of the imagery and style of the biblical prophets reflects the other spiritual literature of those times. Symbols such as the Tree of Life, the wine and the bread, for example, are common in the Middle East, and are found in Canaanite and Mesopotamian literature. Jesus, too, was later to use similar imagery. The prophets often couched their teachings in parables and symbols so that the deeper meaning of their words would only be understood by the true mystic seekers. In some instances, they also used current political or social issues as an allegory or symbol of inner mystic truths. Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan, a well-known modern scholar of Jewish mysticism, has provided good evidence that many of the biblical terms describing the prophets' activities actually refer to specific meditation practices of repetition, remembrance and contemplation.

Within a century of their exile, Cyrus of Persia conquered Babylon. A Zoroastrian, as well as an enlightened king, he permitted Babylon's conquered and subject peoples to return to their homelands and, in 520 BCE, he permitted the Jews to return to Judaea, where work on rebuilding the Temple at Jerusalem began soon after. But since several generations had passed since their exile and Babylon had become their home, many of the Jews preferred to remain. Babylon and nearby communities thus became a centre of Jewish culture, religion and mysticism that lasted fifteen hundred years, until the advent of Islam.

The Rabbinic Tradition

Before the exile, the priests of the Jerusalem Temple were the primary authority in Judaism. They performed specific religious functions in the Temple and in daily Jewish life centred in the home. Once the Temple had been rebuilt in Jerusalem, they resumed their duties, but the role of the *rabbi* (*lit.* teacher, master) started to gain in importance, helping to define religious and social law in an increasingly complex and disharmonious community. By the first century BCE, the Academy or Sanhedrin in both Babylonia and Jerusalem had become the political, religious and judicial authority of the Jews, its rabbis considering issues of both religious and worldly significance. With the destruction by the Romans of the second Temple in 70 CE, the power of the priestly classes waned significantly. The authority of the rabbis was consolidated by the second century CE, becoming greatly strengthened during the period of Islamic rule, and continuing to present times.

The priesthood was an inherited profession, while the rabbis were scholars and legal advisors drawn from the people. The rabbis used their study of the Bible to develop a guide for the numerous issues of day-to-day living. Religion was no longer focused on the Temple at Jerusalem, with sacrificial worship on particular days and pilgrimage for those living afar. It became centred on rituals and prayers in local synagogues, together with an ethical code for guidance in daily life. It is this form of Judaism, rather than the priestly or prophetic, that forms the basis of the Jewish religion as it is practised today.

The interpretations of the first generations of rabbis, compiled at the end of the second century CE, are called the *Mishnah* (*lit.* repetition, study). Subsequent generations of rabbis discussed the *Mishnah* and derived further interpretations. This was called the *Gemara* (*lit.* completion). Together, the *Mishnah* and *Gemara* are called the *Talmud* (*lit.* study, learning). In addition to discussions of a legal nature, the *Talmud* also contains many legends, as well as ethical and mystical teachings that provide a glimpse into the world of the early rabbis. There are two versions of the *Talmud* – the Jerusalem *Talmud*, compiled during the fourth century CE, and the Babylonian *Talmud*, which has become the standard reference work, at the end of the fifth. Further layers of interpretation continued to be added right through to the eighteenth century.

It is known that a number of the rabbis of the *Talmud* were also mystics who practised meditation. The literature they have left uses images and symbols derived from the vision of the prophet Elisha, who saw his Master, Elijah, rising to the heavens in a chariot of fire,[19] and the experiences of the prophet Ezekiel, who had visions of a heavenly throne and chariot, accompanied by lights, colours, sounds and heavenly beings.[20] One of the most well known mystics of the *Talmud* was Rabbi Akiva, the *Talmud* telling the story of how he and his companions entered the king's *pardes* (orchard, garden) – a metaphor for the inner regions. These mystics referred to their inner journey as the journey of the chariot, and were thus known as the *merkavah* (chariot) mystics, their literature bearing a resemblance to some of the gnostic texts of the same period from Egypt and the Middle East.

Another important element in the development of rabbinic Judaism was the influence of Greek culture. As a powerful, maritime nation, Greek influence in antiquity was spread widely throughout Mediterranean countries, gaining further ground after Alexander the Great's conquests of Egypt, Judaea and much of the Middle East during the fourth century BCE. A number of monastic and ascetic sects existed within Judaism during rabbinic times, and their doctrines and mode of living reflect this Greek influence, the Therapeutae and Essenes being two such groups. In modern times, it is also believed that John the Baptist and Jesus were in some way associated with the Essenes, though there is no direct evidence of it.

Despite the fact that some of the rabbis of the *Talmud* were also practising mystics, most rabbis were suspicious of mysticism. Rabbi Ben Zion Bokser explains:

> Some teachers of the *Talmud* cultivated the mystical life, but … while recording the views of those teachers who sought to cultivate mystical interests, the *Talmud* indicates that the religious authorities of the time tried to discourage this tendency.… In some instances, mystical pursuits became intertwined with magic, which was, no doubt, an additional factor that inspired the effort to discourage it.
>
> *Ben Zion Bokser, Jewish Mystical Tradition, JMT p.48*

Contemporary rabbi, David Blumenthal, explains that during the Talmudic period, some of the rabbinic tradition rubbed off on Jewish mysticism, hence the intellectualism or bookishness of Jewish mystic literature. He says that the general concept of Judaism today stems from rabbinic Judaism.[21] Those rabbis who were devoted to the mystic life tended to be secretive about their teachings and practice, using esoteric symbols and stories that could be understood only by the initiated. Even so, explains Blumenthal, during the course of Jewish history there was often a give-and-take between the rationalistic rabbis and the mystics; and just as mysticism tended to be expressed in intellectual terms, often the scholarship of the rationalists became infused with a suppressed mystic yearning. "There is hardly a symbol, act or belief in the rabbinic tradition," he says, "which was not touched, and transformed, by the mystical tradition."[22]

The mystical side of Judaism during the Talmudic period and continuing into the Middle Ages is represented for the most part in the *Hekhalot* literature. *Hekhalot* literally means 'palaces' or 'halls'. These works describe the meditation practices of Jewish mystics who were attempting to travel the inner journey through the spiritual regions or palaces on the *merkavah* (chariot) of light and sound. Most of the works describing the *merkavah* journey were written between the first century BCE and the tenth century CE, and are called the greater and lesser *Hekhalot*.

The *Sefer Yezirah (Book of Formation)*, dating in written form from as early as the third century CE, but probably existing in oral form for several centuries earlier, is an early meditative and astrological manual. Only two thousand words long, it describes the creation as a series of emanations from the one divine Name, Word or Utterance. It outlines a system of meditation on the nature of divinity through the relationships of numbers, the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, and divine names. These methods were used over the centuries by mystics attempting to manipulate supernatural forces. Some legends even ascribe the creation of *golems*, or robot-like living creatures, to rabbis who engaged in these practices.

Jewish Mystics and the Sufis

From the time of Prophet Muḥammad in the seventh century, the flourishing Jewish community became integrally associated with Islamic civilization and mysticism. There is a long history of mutual influence between Jewish and Muslim Sufi mystics, through to the end of the Islamic Empire in the fifteenth century. Scholars have traced a transmission of mystic teachings from Muslim to Jewish mystics in Baghdad during the ninth to the twelfth centuries, and it was these Jewish Sufis who brought the teachings of Jewish mysticism from Baghdad and nearby Arabian cities to centres of European Judaism.

Jewish Sufi manuscripts, discovered during the late nineteenth century in a Cairo *genizah* (a hidden repository in an ancient synagogue), have highlighted the close relationship between Jewish and Muslim mystics of medieval times.

From the eleventh to thirteenth centuries, Jewish mystics quote freely from Sufi mystical writings, which they copied into Hebrew characters.[23] Some Jewish mystics even pursued the spiritual path under the guidance of Sufi Masters. Similarly, and more or less contemporaneously, Jewish mystics in Persia and Turkey shared a devotional spirit with the Muslim mystics of their time, many reading the works of Rūmī and Sa'dī.[24]

Jewish mystics in the Sufi tradition included Baḥya ibn Paquda of eleventh-century Spain. His book *Hovot ha-Levavot (Duties of the Hearts)* deals with the life of the true 'servant', the devotee yearning for the mystical life. Writing in the same vein, in *Mekor Ḥayyim (Fountain of Life),* Solomon ibn Gebirol (also called Avicebron), describes the creation as a series of emanations from the primal Source of Light. Another important mystical work of the twelfth century was the *Sefer ha-Bahir (Book of Brilliance),* which appeared anonymously in Provence, France. The teachings and terminology of these works and of the much earlier *Sefer Yeẓirah* were echoed a few centuries later in the Kabbalah.

One of the most influential writers of the time was Moses Maimonides, author of the philosophic masterpiece *Guide of the Perplexed,* who lived in Cairo during the twelfth century. Although mainly known to later generations as a philosopher, physician and rationalist, it is now believed that Maimonides was also a mystic who stressed the possibility of direct spiritual experience through mystic practice. His son Abraham and grandson Obadyah are known to have been mystics in the Sufi tradition; Obadyah's *Treatise of the Pool,* a remarkable mystical work along Sufi lines, has recently been rediscovered and published.

Jewish mystics in the Sufi tradition were sometimes called *ḥasidim* (devotees, pious ones). Although this movement, and the school of German *Ḥasidim (Ḥasidei Ashkenaz)* that arose during the thirteenth century, were not connected historically with the eighteenth-century ecstatic movement, also known as Hasidism, they foreshadowed many of its elements, particularly its emphasis on devotion, spiritual inwardness and personal experience of God.

The Kabbalah

The aspect of Jewish mysticism most renowned in modern times, and which has almost taken on life as a religious movement and influence in itself, is the Kabbalah. Kabbalah literally means 'received' or 'transmitted', implying inwardly received knowledge. It includes certain doctrines concerning the origin and structure of the creation, the nature of God and the soul, and the relationship between man and the inner realms. Certain specific Kabbalistic practices are also designed to bring about mystic experience of these esoteric truths, and attain mystic union with the Divine. The large body of Kabbalistic literature dating from the thirteenth century consists mainly of esoteric and symbolic interpretations of the Bible and the *Talmud.*

The most influential work of the Kabbalah is the *Zohar* (*lit.* radiance, shining). Although it had been widely believed that the *Zohar* was written during

the Talmudic period by the legendary mystic Rabbi Simeon ben Yoḥai, recent scholarship has shown that most of it was written in the late thirteenth century by Moses de León of Spain, and some smaller sections by other authors of that period. It was not uncommon in those days for authors of religious texts, seeking the authenticity and credibility of an ancient, respected authority, to claim that they had discovered manuscripts written in earlier periods.

Even so, although Moses de León may have been the actual author of the *Zohar*, many scholars and students of mysticism believe that he was indeed compiling, recording and synthesizing mystical traditions dating from earlier times. Many of the *Zohar*'s underlying principles coincide with universal mystic teachings – for instance, the theory of creation as an emanation from the original divine Light, the concept of spiritual, astral and physical levels of creation, reincarnation, and so forth. But the Jewish mystics who wrote the *Zohar* gave expression to their mystic experiences by linking them to biblical references and couching them in terms acceptable to Jewish tradition. Also woven into the *Zohar* are accretions of legend, ritual and superstition that reflect the influences of the many countries and cultures to which the Jewish people were exposed following the Babylonian and Roman conquests of Palestine, and their consequent dispersal (the Diaspora) through many lands.

Most of the works grouped in the Kabbalah impart knowledge concerning the nature of God and the structure of the various realms and levels of the creation. They do not generally urge a devotional approach in pursuing direct experience of the Divine. In this sense, Kabbalism is similar to what the Indians call *jñāna yoga* (the *yoga* of knowledge), while the Sufi or Hasidic tradition is more like *bhakti yoga* (the *yoga* of devotion). As Bokser explained, the Kabbalah "proceeds through an intricate web of esoteric symbols, and its offering is primarily a *gnosis*, an esoteric knowledge which *in itself* is said to yield man the highest rewards of divine commendation".[25]

A notable exception to this approach was that of Abraham Abulafia and his students. A Kabbalist of thirteenth-century Spain and Italy, Abulafia was influenced both by Eastern mysticism, including forms of *yoga* such as *prāṇāyāma*, and by the thirteenth-century German Hasidism. He taught his followers a complex system of meditation and concentration based on combinations and permutations of letters and words, with the goal of entering the inner spiritual realms and receiving "the descent of the divine influx". Because of his unorthodox practices, many of which involved repetition of divine names whose pronunciation had been forbidden, Abulafia was excommunicated as a heretic by the orthodox Jewish authorities of his time and, for several centuries, many of his manuscripts were lost. Today modern researchers have successfully unearthed and studied them, rediscovering a lost chapter of Jewish mystical history.

After the expulsion of the Jews from Spain under the Inquisition in 1492, hundreds of thousands went into exile in Turkey and other countries of the eastern Mediterranean, some returning to make a home for themselves in the Holy

Land of Israel. Those of a religiously oriented mind tried to understand the catastrophes their community had recently undergone as divine correction or punishment for their lack of devotion to God. Thus, increasingly, many Jews of that period turned inwards, finding in the Kabbalah and the mystical doctrines of esoteric Judaism the nurturing spiritual framework for understanding and transcending worldly experience. It was at this time that Rabbi Isaac Luria (1534–72), also known as *ha-Ari* (the Lion), began to teach at Safed in upper Galilee. The movement attracted large numbers, with students coming from throughout Europe and elsewhere. The 'divine Rabbi Isaac' was said to possess the Holy Spirit, and to have been given the revelation of Elijah. Luria transformed the doctrine of emanation described in the *Zohar* into a more complex system. He taught that at the time of creation, there had been a primal cosmic catastrophe, when the divine light broke its 'vessels', becoming dispersed in the creation, and entrapped by matter. The *sefirot* (divine emanations) were understood as representing divine forces, which could be brought into balance through the practice of particular unifications *(yiḥudim)* and intentions *(kavvanot)*. The unifications involved focused repetitions of names or phrases, and the intentions consisted of rituals performed with specific intention or purpose. The goal of the practices he taught was to raise the sparks of light, and permit them to return to their Source, to bring the divine forces into harmony and restore the balance in the heavenly spheres.

Although some Jewish mystics claimed success in following the complicated practices of letter and word combinations and permutations, there are also many stories relating the dangers and pitfalls experienced by these practitioners. Despite the dangers, however, some Jewish mystics continued to teach these practices openly, into the seventeenth century, when secrecy became more advisable; and by the eighteenth century they had almost died out.

The Kabbalah has been an influence not only on the Jews. In it, Christian scholars have discerned hints and symbols of Jesus and his teachings. The Kabbalah is also a focus of Freemasonry and other secret societies that have as their goal the rediscovery of a mystical knowledge they believe to have been handed down through the generations since the time of Adam. According to the Freemasons, the *Zohar* itself is the vehicle of the most profound religious mysteries, revealed only orally in previous ages.

Jewish mystics have not been confined to Europe and the Middle East. During the seventeenth century, a Jewish mystic by the name of Sarmad settled in India. Born into a rabbinical family of Kāshān, in Iran, he came to India as a trader, where he experienced a spiritual transformation. Sarmad is still revered in mystic India, though little is known about the details of his life, and western Judaism is largely unaware of him. From his writings, however, there is evidence that Sarmad was a mystic of the highest order, a Saint who transcended the outer formalities of religion and found God within himself. He sang of union with the Name, the inner divine Music. Some sources say he converted to Islam and then

to Hinduism, but if his *rubā'īyāts* (verses) are read carefully, it seems clear that although he examined all religions, he rejected their external limitations, embracing the inner teaching which he recognized as only one. Singing boldly of his unconventional love of God, and teaching others to do the same, he was beheaded as a heretic in 1659–60 by Aurangzeb, Mughul emperor of India.

Hasidism

Mysticism often flourishes in times of change or hardship, and the most recent flourishing of Jewish mysticism was the Hasidic movement that appeared in Poland at the end of the eighteenth century. Once again, it was a time of severe Jewish persecution. A deep yearning for God to reveal Himself, and for a religious renewal that would lift the soul out of the sufferings of the world, was fulfilled by this movement, which quickly transformed Judaism. Martin Buber, the great twentieth-century philosopher and presenter of Hasidism, explains:

> Nowhere in the last centuries has the soul-force of Judaism so manifested itself as in Hasidism.... Hasidism took the social form of a great popular community – not an order of the secluded, not a brotherhood of the select, but a popular community in all its medley, in all its spiritual and social multiplicity.
>
> *Martin Buber, Hasidism and Modern Man, HMM pp.40, 42*

Hasidism was a populist movement, and through it the ideal of saintliness entered into every crevice of Jewish life. During this period, many spiritual teachers appeared whom their disciples called *Rebbes* or *Ẓaddikim* (Masters, Pious Ones), and various communities of *Ḥasidim* formed around them.

The first Hasidic Master, the Ba'al Shem Tov (*lit.* Master of the Good Name) was a simple, uneducated man – the antithesis of the traditional rabbi, who was generally a scholar and an intellectual. The Ba'al Shem Tov communed with God internally, preferring the stillness of nature to the synagogue. It is said that he was able to speak to and understand the birds and animals. He spoke of seeing the divine Light, and taught his disciples that God can be perceived in everything and reached through pure deeds. The entire creation is a manifestation of the will of God, for nothing can exist without the divine spark. There is no evil that exists outside of God. So for the true seeker, God can be found in everything, and in every action, no matter how mundane, as long as it is done with pure intention, joy and concentration on God. He taught the importance of *devekut* (attachment) or cleaving to God at every moment. As Buber wrote:

> Therefore, it will not do to serve God only in isolated hours and with set words and gestures. One must serve God with one's whole life, with the whole of the everyday, with the whole of reality.
>
> *Martin Buber, Hasidism and Modern Man, HMM pp.41–42*

The teachings of the *Ḥasidim* incorporated certain aspects of Kabbalism concerning the divine origin of the soul and the emanation of the various levels of creation (the *sefirot)* from the Divine. They also taught meditation practices based on the Kabbalistic teachings of Rabbi Isaac Luria.

The two main disciples of the Ba'al Shem Tov were Rabbi Yaakov Yosef of Polnoy (*d.*1782) and Dov Baer, the Maggid (channel, preacher) of Mezhericz, from whom most of the important lines of later Hasidism arose. Those whose teachings are still popular today include Naḥman of Bratslav, known today mostly from his mystical teaching stories, Menaḥem Naḥum of Chernobyl and Shne'ur Zalman of Lyady, from whom the ḤaBaD school of Hasidism came into being.

At first, the *Ḥasidim* were regarded as heretics by mainstream Jewish rabbis and the community at large; some were even excommunicated, their writings being put in *ḥerem* (quarantine), and reading them forbidden. Later however, as the Hasidic *Rebbes* gathered more and more adherents, their teachings spread and gained strength among the people. Nowadays, the descendants of the *Ḥasidim* still follow the *Rebbes* of their respective lines, but the teachings have for the most part become another form of orthodox ritual and study of scripture, though sometimes infused with an intensity, joy and fervour that reflects their true Hasidic origin.

The end of the nineteenth century saw a declining interest in the mystical side of Judaism, as the *Haskalah,* the enlightenment movement, took over. All over the world, science became the new god, and people rejected religion – especially mysticism – as superstition. However, in certain parts of Europe, small groups continued to study the Kabbalah, while some Hasidic lines maintained their integrity, if not always the purity of their original purpose.

The late twentieth century, however, continuing into present times, has seen a resurgence in the study of the Kabbalah and other Jewish mystical movements, and many seekers have tried to follow the meditation practices of the past, using old manuscripts as their guides. This is partly thanks to the rediscovery and publication of many lost or suppressed manuscripts as well as an increasing interest in mysticism in all sectors of Western society. Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, Martin Buber, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan, Reb Zalman Schacter, and Jonathan Omer-Man are among the Jewish leaders who have emphasized once again the need for inwardness in spiritual devotion. This has led to examination of self and tradition. As Rabbi Ben Zion Bokser wrote:

> The mystical spirit that craves for a direct encounter with God, for a fresh illumination of soul, is not content with pondering a tradition, even a mystical tradition. To gain this boon the mystic must travel the lone road of meditation, of struggling with his own opaque material self, to break the barrier that separates him from God and to enter directly into contact with the divine mystery.
>
> *Ben Zion Bokser, Jewish Mystical Tradition, JMT pp.31–32*

The Essenes

Considering the prominence given to the Essenes in modern times, it will be of interest to include them in this brief survey, though despite the wealth of twentieth-century elaborations, very little is actually known about them. Apart from some references in the rabbinic literature and a few passing comments by the Christian fathers, only three other writers of antiquity ever speak of the Essenes, and that but briefly. It seems, however, that they were a significant part of Jewish mysticism in pre-Christian and early Christian times.

The Alexandrian Jew, Philo Judaeus (*c.*20 BCE – 50 CE) and the Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus (*c.*37–100 CE) both say that there were about 4000 Essenes living in the cities and villages of Judaea. Conversely, Pliny the Elder (23–79 CE) speaks of them as having a settlement or settlements near the Dead Sea, living "away from the western shore, far enough to avoid harmful things, a people alone, … companions of palm trees",[26] although it is unclear whether the "harmful things" refer to the noxious contents of the Dead Sea or the disturbances of the world! Presuming that there is substance to both accounts, it seems probable that some Essenes lived in separate communities while others were more integrated with normal society, according to their bent of mind or to the spread of opinion within the group.

Josephus comments that "these men live the same kind of life as do those whom the Greeks call Pythagoreans,"[27] from which it may be understood that their beliefs were mystical or esoteric, and that they were probably vegetarian and abstained from alcohol, like the Pythagoreans. He also writes:

> The opinion obtains among them that while the body is corruptible and its constituent matter impermanent, the soul is immortal and imperishable. Emanating from the subtlest aether (spirit), these souls become entangled, as it were, in the prison house of the body, to which they are drawn by some natural spell. But when once they are released from the bonds of the flesh, then, as though liberated from a long captivity, they rejoice and are borne aloft. Sharing the same belief as the sons of Greece …
>
> *Josephus, Jewish War 2:8.11 (154–55); cf. J2 pp.380–83, JW p.136*

Philo describes them as "not sacrificing living animals, but studying rather to preserve their own minds in a state of holiness and purity".[28] He also says that they were complete pacifists, not being involved in the manufacture of "arrows, or javelins, or swords, or helmets, or breastplates, or shields; no makers of arms or of military engines; no one, in short, attending to any employment whatever connected with war, or even to any of those occupations even in peace which are easily perverted to wicked purposes".[29]

With these three reports, the sum total of extant knowledge might have rested, but for the extraordinary mid-twentieth-century discovery of a wealth of very ancient papyrus scrolls, many of them broken into numerous fragments,

lying in eleven caves near the western shores of the Dead Sea, near the ruins of the ancient settlement of Khirbet Qumran. The story of the young Bedouin shepherd who made the first discovery, and subsequent events, has been told many times, and there is no need to retell it here. But one of the many theories concerning this community, and the apparently associated library hidden in the caves, was that this was the Essene site spoken of by Pliny.

Scholars are divided in their opinions, particularly because there is no reference in any of the papyri to the Essenes, nor indeed are these diverse documents representative of only one school of thought. From these writings, however, it is clear that the community – whoever they were – did at one time have a great teacher. He is unnamed and referred to as the Righteous (Spiritual) Teacher or the Righteous One *(Ẓaddik).* And among the many scrolls are some devotional and often ecstatic psalms of great beauty, normally attributed to this teacher, which bear all the hallmarks of a mystic's pen.

But who was this otherwise unknown Teacher of Righteousness whose followers treated him as their spiritual Master? And was the Qumran site his headquarters – situated conveniently ten miles south of Jericho and ten miles to the east of Jerusalem – within easy access but sufficiently far away to avoid the business of urban life? No one really knows.

Both the Essenes and the Dead Sea Scrolls have been cited in the search for Christian origins. But apart from the use of language and idioms common to the period, there is no clear connection between the scrolls and Jesus or John the Baptist. In fact, it is generally reckoned that many of the texts predate Jesus. Even so, these psalms express – often in guarded language – a great deal of mystic teaching. Understandably, their style is also similar to that of the biblical *Psalms,* as well as the pre-Christian *Psalms of Solomon,* and the early Christian and deeply mystical *Odes of Solomon.* It must also be of significance that both the early Christians in Palestine and the writers of the scrolls called themselves the *Ebionim,* the 'Poor Ones'. The most likely explanation is that the Teacher of Righteousness, the Essenes, John the Baptist, Jesus, and probably the writers of the earlier Wisdom literature such as Jesus ben Sirach, were all representative of the esoteric or mystic tradition within Palestine and Judaism at that time.

There is certainly no doubt that some themes, common to other mystical literature of the period, run throughout the hymns of praise and devotion found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. God's "Wisdom", also called "Thy Power",[30] is understood to be the creator of all things, as it is throughout *Proverbs,* the *Wisdom of Solomon* and the *Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach.* The fabricator of all evil and wickedness is *Belial* or Satan, the devil, and there are even what seem to be veiled allusions to reincarnation in language that is used specifically for this topic in more definitive texts. The writer thanks God for having saved him from the lot of the wicked, from his own sins, from the pit of *Sheol,* for having been given life, and for having opened his ear to divine mysteries. He is a "shape of clay kneaded in water"[31] – a man – who feels he has been the recipient of God's

special grace and mercy, far above that which he merited. He feels constantly guarded and protected from all the forces of this world that would otherwise pull him astray.

He has taken refuge in God's mystic Name. He has been placed beside a "spring of water in a dry land", and has found souls who are like "trees of life beside a mysterious fountain" that draw their life from the "everlasting Plant" and "Living Waters", wishing to "be one with the everlasting Spring". He has found the "Plant of Truth" or the "Plant of Heaven", the eternal Tree of Life.[32] No wonder he is full of praise and thanksgiving for such blessings.

In fact, most aspects of the mystic path are given expression in these rather beautiful and often poignant psalms or hymns, many of which are sadly fragmentary owing to the condition of the manuscript, and which scholars have admitted considerable difficulty in translating. It seems very likely that they are the writings of a mystic who taught the path of the creative Power or "Wisdom". "Wisdom", says the writer, has created all things. It is His "Law":

> By Thy Wisdom all things exist from eternity,
> and before creating them Thou knewest their works
> for ever and ever.
> Nothing is done without Thee
> and nothing is known unless Thou desire it.
>
> Thou hast created all the spirits,
> and hast established a Statute and Law
> for all their works.
>
> *Thanksgiving Hymns IX:1–10 (6), CDSS p.253*

It is also by "Wisdom" that mystic perception is attained by lowly human beings:

> These things I know
> by the Wisdom which comes from Thee;
> For Thou hast unstopped my ears
> to marvellous mysteries.
>
> And yet I, a shape of clay
> kneaded in water,
> a ground of shame
> and a source of pollution,
> a melting pot of wickedness
> and an edifice of sin,
> a straying and perverted spirit
> of no understanding,
> fearful of righteous judgments,

what can I say that is not foreknown,
and what can I utter that is not foretold?
Thanksgiving Hymns IX:20–25 (6), CDSS p.254

The writer says that he "will meditate" continuously and "evermore" on the divine Power or "Might", the holy "Name":

I will sing Thy mercies,
and on Thy Might I will meditate all day long.
I will bless Thy Name evermore.
I will declare Thy glory in the midst of the sons of men,
and my soul shall delight in Thy great goodness.
Thanksgiving Hymns XIX:5–10 (21), CDSS p.288

This Power is like a "Fountain" or "Spring" in the desert of this world. Indeed, the writer says that the Divine can only be approached through this "Fountain of Life":

I thank Thee, O Lord,
for Thou hast placed me beside a Fountain of streams
in an arid land;
And close to a Spring of Waters
in a dry land;
And beside a watered garden
in a wilderness....

No man shall approach the Wellspring of Life
or drink the Waters of Holiness
with the everlasting Trees,
or bear fruit with the Plant of Heaven –
Who seeing has not discerned,
and considering has not believed
in the Fountain of Life;
Who has turned his hand against the everlasting Bud.
Thanksgiving Hymns XVI:1–5, 10–15 (18), CDSS pp.278–79

1.5 CHRISTIANITY

An introduction to the mystical side of Christianity must address two related elements: mysticism in the original teachings of Jesus and mysticism among later Christians. The first, however, is not so easy to determine, for what his original teachings were is by no means certain. Understandably, every Christian would

like to believe that they follow the teachings of Jesus; yet no one disputes the fact that from the very earliest days, Christianity has been divided as to what he actually taught. It makes sense, therefore, to begin by examining the primary and universally accepted sources of Jesus' original teachings – the four gospels – not only for their mystical content, but also regarding their authenticity. The remainder of the New Testament and other early Christian documents are then briefly reviewed, followed by an overview of what is more generally regarded as Christian mysticism.

John's Gospel

Although a strong mystical tradition is present in Christianity, it is not normally said that Jesus himself was a mystic. Nevertheless, when the writer of John's gospel has Jesus say, "I and my Father are one,"[33] he is indicating that Jesus was a mystic of the highest order; for union with God is the essential and supreme goal of all mysticism.

John's gospel is often described as the mystical gospel; many scholars have also observed that it is not to be taken as a historical account of the life and teachings of Jesus. It is intended to convey the understanding that Jesus was an incarnation of the *Logos,* the "Word ... made flesh".[34] Even the sayings attributed to Jesus in John's gospel, as well as the dialogues with the Jews and others, are regarded only as literary devices for putting across the teachings of Jesus, as understood by the author of this gospel. Fictional dialogues or speeches attributed to actual historical figures are a common feature of ancient literature, as in Plato's dialogues. Likewise, in the Hebrew Bible, God and His creative Power, particularly as Wisdom, both 'speak'. It was simply a literary style of those times, used for a variety of purposes, not a means of recording history.

Unlike the three 'synoptic' gospels, the essence of John's gospel is the mystical teaching of the *Logos.* It is the "Living Water",[35] the "Bread from heaven" and the "Bread of Life",[36] the "True Vine",[37] and so on. Starting with its well-known opening verses, it takes as its theme, the story of the *Logos:*

> In the beginning was the Word *(Logos),*
>   and the Word *(Logos)* was with God,
>   and the Word *(Logos)* was God.
> The same was in the beginning with God.
> All things were made by it (the *Logos*);
> And without it (the *Logos*)
>   was not any thing made that was made.
>
> *John 1:1–3; cf. KJV, TYN*

From the outset, the writer's emphasis is entirely on the *Logos.* When Jesus speaks, it is the *Logos* speaking. In the verses where Jesus speaks so authoritatively in the first person – so different in tone and character from the Jesus who

speaks in Matthew's Sermon on the Mount – it is actually the *Logos* or Jesus as a personification of the *Logos* who is speaking. There are a number of such passages:

> I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life:
> no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.
>
> *John 14:6, KJV*

> I am the True Vine, and my Father is the husbandman….
> Abide in me, and I in you.
> As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself,
> except it abide in the vine,
> no more can ye, except ye abide in me.
> I am the Vine, ye are the branches:
> he that abideth in me, and I in him,
> the same bringeth forth much fruit:
> For without me ye can do nothing.
>
> *John 15:1, 4–5, KJV*

And:

> I am the Bread of Life:
> he that cometh to me shall never hunger;
> And he that believeth on me shall never thirst….
>
> Verily, verily, I say unto you,
> he that believeth on me hath everlasting life.
> I am that Bread of Life….
>
> This is the Bread which cometh down from heaven,
> that a man may eat thereof, and not die.
> I am the Living Bread which came down from heaven:
> if any man eat of this Bread, he shall live for ever.
>
> *John 6:35, 47–48, 50–51, KJV*

John's gospel has no nativity or virgin birth stories, and the original version probably had no resurrection stories either. The last two chapters of John, relating resurrection incidents and addressing some of the concerns of Christianity long after the death of Jesus, are generally acknowledged by scholars to be late additions penned by a different writer or writers altogether. But the omission of these stories is not through any lack of information on the part of the writer. Since John's gospel is commonly regarded as the last of the four gospels to have been written, usually dated to around 90–95 CE, the writer would have been fully

aware of the earlier gospels. Indeed, as some scholars have pointed out, he seems to have been at pains to correct some of the mistakes of the earlier gospels. Thus, the virgin birth of Matthew and Luke is replaced in John with the "Only-begotten Son" of the Father – the *Logos;* the external Second Coming and the end of the world so eagerly anticipated in the synoptics become an internal experience and the quest for eternal life; and the physical resurrection of the synoptics becomes the spiritual meeting with the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, the spiritual form of Jesus.

At every step, John has a spiritual or mystical perspective on the events related in the synoptic gospels. Even his miracle stories come with an interpretation of their spiritual symbolism. Indeed, while Jesus heals all and sundry in the synoptics, John presents just seven carefully chosen miracle cameos, each of which is more of an allegory than a historical event. The feeding of the multitude turns into a dialogue with the Jews on the nature of the true "Bread from heaven".[38] The man given sight, who had been "blind from birth",[39] becomes the focus of a discussion on spiritual blindness and on infirmity as the result of sin. The raising of Lazarus from the dead becomes the opportunity for observations on death and spiritual resurrection.[40] Likewise, seemingly innocent events become the opportunity for spiritual teaching, just as the Samarian woman at the well becomes a discourse on the benefits of "Living Water",[41] and when Nicodemus tells Jesus that his miracles prove him to be a "teacher come from God", the reply he gets is on the necessity of being "born again".[42]

In the guise of relating what had become a well-known story, John tries to put across its inner, spiritual message. He is interested in the history of Jesus only as a vehicle to convey spiritual teaching. But who this John was is a mystery. Certainly, his gospel was written too late for it to have been written by John the disciple of Jesus. This is significant, because the same is true of the other three gospels. None of them were compiled either by Jesus' disciples or by eyewitnesses.

Some help is provided by the three New Testament letters, *1 John, 2 John* and *3 John,* also traditionally attributed to the writer of John's gospel. *2 John* and *3 John* both identify their author as "the Elder" or the "Presbyter".[43] But these two letters are short, containing so little teaching material that the only certain inference that can be drawn from them is that the Elder is a leader whose influence has spread further than his own local community. *1 John,* like the gospel, is anonymous and, unlike the other two letters, is more of an essay "On the Word of Life".[44] Although there are some doctrinal differences between *1 John* and the gospel, they do share a general similarity of thought and style. From this it is commonly presumed that *1 John* was written by the author of the fourth gospel or that its author had so immersed himself in the gospel that he expressed himself in the language and idiom of its discourses. But were *1 John* and the gospel written by "the Elder"? And, if so, who was he? Nobody really knows.[45]

The Synoptic Gospels

As a source of the mystical teachings attributed to Jesus, John's gospel is invaluable. But the synoptics, especially Matthew and Luke, also contribute greatly because it is only here that sayings and parables attributed to Jesus can actually be found. Mark, Matthew and Luke are called 'syn-optic' because they can be viewed 'with one eye', from a single viewpoint, there being many passages that are more or less identical. The implications of this, however, did not really dawn on scholars until the mid-nineteenth century. Since then they have been at great pains to analyse the many similarities and differences between these three gospels, and many theories have been advanced to explain the relationships between them.

Disentangling the threads of this complex web is not helped by the fact that all manuscripts in those days were hand-written and hand-copied. Printing did not come to Europe until the fifteenth century. Mistakes and corrections – intentional and otherwise, significant and insignificant – were thus introduced into practically every copy made. Moreover, the earliest surviving texts of the New Testament are dated as late as the fourth and fifth centuries, three or four hundred years after the death of Jesus. With the synoptic gospels probably being written somewhere between 65 and 100 CE, this means that for a period of three or four hundred years they were subject to the vagaries of hand-copying, as well as interpolations and corrections according to the doctrinal convictions of the copyists. A lot can happen to a hand-copied text over several centuries.

Despite the tangle of relationships, certain key features have emerged. It is generally agreed that the first gospel was Mark's, probably written in Rome between 65 and 70 CE, before the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple, which are not mentioned. One of the most remarkable aspects of Mark is that it is composed almost entirely of narrative, much of it miraculous. The writer was clearly a lover of miracle stories for he records very little of Jesus' actual teaching. His simple and direct message, written in a rather crude and unpolished Greek, is that Jesus the Son of God – demonstrated to be so through signs and miracles – was persecuted and crucified for the sins of mankind. Man must repent and be baptized, for Jesus will soon be coming again to judge the world. The followers of Jesus will then be saved, and the rest condemned to hellfire. Observing this simple message, scholars have conjectured that Mark was written to bolster the faith of an unlettered community of Roman disciples during a period of hardship, perhaps during or after the persecutions of Nero following the great fire of Rome in 64 CE, when it began to seem as if the Second Coming would never come.

Like John, Mark contains no mention of a virgin birth. The nativity stories found in Luke and Matthew are completely absent. Throughout his gospel, Mark's style is uneven, and he begins characteristically with an abrupt entry into an account of the ministry of John the Baptist (of whom, too, no biographical information is provided). And he ends with an empty tomb – there are no resur-

rection stories either; these are also regarded as later additions. For a lover of the miraculous such as Mark, this is revealing. It can only be presumed that he had not heard these stories, for had he done so, he would almost certainly have included them.

The writer of Mark's gospel is unknown, Marcus being a common name in the Roman Empire. But whoever he was, it is unlikely that he had ever set foot in Palestine because his narrative contains some significant geographical errors. He is also unlikely to have been Jewish because, in addition to a marked anti-Jewish tone common to all the gospels, he exhibits a deficient as well as insensitive knowledge of Judaism and Jewish customs.[46] Therefore, as a source of the actual teachings of Jesus, mystical or otherwise, Mark's gospel helps little, and whatever it does contain is better presented in Matthew and Luke.

Mark's sources may be unknown, but this is not so true of Matthew and Luke. One of their sources is clearly Mark, from whom they copy whole passages, more or less verbatim! And it is here that the relative methods of Matthew and Luke begin to emerge. They are compilers, editors and arrangers of documents already in existence. Matthew, for example, chops up his sources, using them in smaller chunks. Though he changes little of the actual text, he rearranges the material to fit his overall plan of five major discourses with introductory narrative and vignettes. Luke, on the other hand, uses his sources in larger blocks but, having higher literary aspirations, changes and tailors things – including the sayings of Jesus – to fit his style and overall intentions. Most significant, however, in the present context, is the existence of almost identical sayings and parables of Jesus found only in Matthew and Luke, together with others found just in one of them.

It is from this evidence that scholars have formulated the theory that there once existed a significant document containing only the sayings and parables of Jesus, devoid of any narrative. They have called it *Q*, from the German *Quelle*, meaning source. Matthew and Luke simply took this text and others like it, including Mark, and wove them all together. But because these sayings came with no accompanying narrative, Matthew and Luke who – like Mark – were telling a story, had to create their own settings. This is why many of the sayings and parables of Jesus are more or less the same in these two gospels, while the settings are often different. For instance, the selection of sayings that in Matthew becomes the Sermon on the Mount, with other parts appearing here and there throughout his gospel, appear together in Luke as a longer 'Sermon on the Plain'. Moreover, in the process of creating these settings, the implied meaning of the sayings – and sometimes the sayings themselves – get modified to fit the needs of the narrative.

Matthew and Luke have also added nativity and resurrection stories, along with other narrative material. These, too, are of considerable interest when compared, for the narratives conflict, and also contain historical inaccuracies. Matthew's story of the three wise men and Herod's mass infanticide is most

unlikely, for example. Even in those days, Herod would never have got away with it. It would have been an illegal and horrendous act by any standards, even for a tyrannical ruler, spelling political suicide, and turning every family in the country against him, creating massive unrest. In any case, there is absolutely no historical record of such an event, which would hardly have gone unrecorded by the Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus (*c.*37–100 CE) and the other historians of those times.[47]

There are also discrepancies surrounding Jesus' birthplace, traditionally held to have been Bethlehem because of biblical 'prophecies', referred to in both Matthew and Luke, that the Messiah would be born into the house of King David, Bethlehem being David's early home.[48] In Matthew, Joseph and Mary already live in Bethlehem, and Jesus is presumably born at home, for Matthew makes no mention of a stable, nor is there any reason why they should have gone looking for alternative accommodation when Mary was about to give birth. After their flight to Egypt to avoid Herod's massacre they then return to Judaea and live in Nazareth.

Luke, on the other hand, has Joseph and Mary already living in Nazareth, and so needs a reason why they should go to Bethlehem. He therefore has them respond to a census conducted, he says, in the time of Herod the Great when Quirinius was governor of Judaea. But his story is historically impossible. Herod the Great died in 4 BCE, and Rome did not annex Judaea until 6 CE. Quirinius took up office in Syria in 6 CE, and the census is reliably recorded by Josephus as an unprecedented event taking place in that year.

So the stories of Matthew and Luke are at best inaccurate and incompatible; and by combining the two into one composite, emotive, but highly questionable narrative, the details of the nativity stories told in traditional Christianity drift even further away from historical possibility.[49]

There is also the question of language. All four gospels were written in the ordinary conversational Greek of those times, Greek being the *lingua franca* of the Hellenized world, adopted by the Roman Empire as its common language. Jesus' mother tongue would have been Aramaic, but he would almost certainly have been able to speak some Greek and, like many of his contemporaries, he may well have been completely bilingual. It is uncertain, therefore, whether the sources of Jesus' sayings and parables available to Matthew and Luke were as he had spoken or perhaps written them, or whether they had been translated from Aramaic into Greek, for the benefit of Jesus' Greek-speaking followers. So, once again, there is uncertainty over what Jesus actually said, and how much things have been changed.

As with John and Mark, it is unclear who compiled Luke and Matthew. Luke is traditionally believed to have been the friend of Paul mentioned affectionately in one of Paul's letters as, "Luke the beloved physician".[50] Although not overtly Pauline, Luke's gospel certainly presents a Christianity more or less compatible with the teachings of Paul, though there are some differences. But

the compiler of Matthew is completely unknown. According to one theory, Matthew's gospel took its name from a collection of sayings and parables of Jesus said to have been recorded by Jesus' disciple, Matthew the tax collector. Papias, a mid-second-century Bishop of Hierapolis who wrote five volumes (now lost) entitled *The Sayings of the Lord Explained*, says:

> Matthew compiled the *Sayings* in the Aramaic language, and everyone translated them as well as he could.
>
> *Papias, in Eusebius, History of the Church 3, HC p.152*

As regards their respective dates of composition, Matthew and Luke were written after the fall of Jerusalem (70 CE), since the destruction of the Temple is mentioned in both, as part of the prophecies concerning the imminently expected Second Coming and the end of the world.[51] Matthew is generally dated between 80 and 95 CE. Luke is likewise dated to around 80 CE.

Now this is all a very brief introduction to some of the scholarly detective work that has taken place during the last hundred and fifty years. Its relevance here is to highlight the considerable uncertainty that hovers over the sayings and parables attributed to Jesus in the two primary sources of Matthew and Luke. Indeed, some Christian scholars have gone so far as to suggest that there is nothing in the gospels that can be reliably attributed to Jesus.

Jesus' Teaching in the Gospels

Christianity died out rapidly in Palestine, its place of origin, and did not gain acceptance in the Roman Empire until nearly 300 years later. In the intervening period, it was simply a cult, membership of which was illegal according to Roman law. Though the law was not always enforced, there were periodic clampdowns, when the Christians were persecuted by the more tyrannical of the Roman emperors, and their books destroyed. So the documents that survived the copying, the editing, the 'correction', the persecutions, and the burnings to become what are now called the gospels are a very poor record of the complete teachings of Jesus. Consequently, when it comes to understanding and interpreting his teachings, the circumstances of their origin must be borne in mind, because it is clearly impractical to refer to this background on every occasion.

Fortunately, despite the uncertain provenance of the gospels and the unreliability of the stories they contain, a goodly proportion of the actual sayings and parables attributed to Jesus may well have survived more or less intact. Certainly, there is much that is in keeping with the teachings of other mystics, being for the most part universal in scope and completely understandable in a mystic context. Jesus says, for example, that

> the kingdom of God is within you.
>
> *Luke 17:21, KJV*

And, he continues, when the mind is pure, it is possible to meet God within:

> Blessed are the pure in heart:
> for they shall see God.
>
> *Matthew 5:8, KJV*

He also reiterates Jewish biblical teaching that the relationship of the soul to God is one of love:

> Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,
> and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.
>
> *Matthew 22:37; cf. Deuteronomy 6:5, KJV*

And he adds that the way to relate to His creation is also through love:

> Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.
>
> *Matthew 19:19, 22:29; Leviticus 19:18, KJV*

More specifically mystical, he observes that the path to God lies through the third or single eye that lies behind and between the two eyebrows:

> The light of the body is the eye:
> If therefore thine eye be single,
> thy whole body shall be full of light.
>
> *Matthew 6:22, KJV*

This point has also been called the doorway or gateway to the inner realms. It is at this door that the seeker knocks by focusing the mind through constant repetition, recollection or interior prayer. To hold the mind at the inner door, he says, in readiness to receive his grace is the real prayer:

> Ask, and it shall be given you;
> Seek, and ye shall find;
> Knock, and it shall be opened unto you:
>
> For everyone that asketh, receiveth;
> And he that seeketh, findeth;
> And to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.
>
> *Matthew 7:7–8, KJV*

When the mind is fully focused at this inner door, then the Creative Word is heard as divine Music, also called the "Voice" of God by the gnostics and by

many other mystics throughout the ages. Then those who are spiritually "dead", who are absorbed in the play of life in this world and trapped in the physical body as in a tomb, are revitalized with the Source of Life itself:

> The dead shall hear the Voice of the Son of God,
> and they that hear shall live.
>
> *John 5:25, KJV*

On hearing this mystic Voice, the soul rises up from the grave of the body and enters the higher heavens or "mansions" of the soul:

> In my Father's house are many mansions:
> if it were not so, I would have told you.
>
> *John 14:2, KJV*

As preparation for this ascent, and for the meditation to be successful, a high degree of mental purity and spiritual excellence in the conduct of life are required:

> Be ye therefore perfect,
> even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.
>
> *Matthew 5:48, KJV*

By following the spiritual path, the seeker develops faith in God, relying on Him rather than on the unending quest for the transient things of this life:

> Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth,
> where moth and rust doth corrupt,
> and where thieves break through and steal:
> But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven,
> where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt,
> and where thieves do not break through nor steal:
> For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.
>
> *Matthew 6:19–21, KJV*

And:

> Therefore I say unto you, take no thought for your life,
> what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink;
> nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on.
> Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not,
neither do they reap, nor gather into barns;
yet your heavenly Father feedeth them.
Are ye not much better than they?

Which of you by taking thought
can add one cubit unto his stature?

And why take ye thought for raiment?
Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow:
they toil not, neither do they spin.
And yet I say unto you,
that even Solomon in all his glory
was not arrayed like one of these.

Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field,
which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven,
shall He not much more clothe you,
O ye of little faith?

Therefore take no thought, saying,
"What shall we eat?" or, "What shall we drink?"
or, "Wherewithal shall we be clothed?" …
for your heavenly Father knoweth
that ye have need of all these things.
But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness,
and all these things shall be added unto you.

Take therefore no thought for the morrow:
for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself.
Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

Matthew 6:25–34, KJV

He also advises adopting an attitude of love, good will and nonviolence towards all fellow creatures:

Ye have heard that it hath been said,
'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth':
But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil:
but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek,
turn to him the other also.
And if any man will sue thee at the law,
and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.

And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile,
  go with him twain.
Give to him that asketh thee,
  and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.

Ye have heard that it hath been said,
  'Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.'
But I say unto you, love your enemies,
  bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you,
  and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.

Matthew 5:38–44, KJV

These, then, are some of the fundamental teachings of Jesus found in the gospels. Yet such teachings possess a timeless quality that cannot be regarded as specifically Christian. They are a recommendation of how to live life with an awareness of God's presence. They are universal in their outlook. In fact, if the sayings of Jesus are carefully studied, it is found that this is the case with much of what is attributed to him. The underlying trend in all that Jesus says in the gospels is universal and spiritual, rather than sectarian or religious.

Paul

Only a small part of the gospels contains the actual teachings of Jesus, the remainder being a patchwork of narrative, relating isolated incidents of various kinds. Yet even if Jesus had been active as a teacher for only three years, there would have been a great deal more that he said and did. The gospels, therefore, can hardly be regarded as a definitive statement of his teachings and a complete story of his life. The truth is, they contain only a few scattered fragments.

The gospels make up only four of the twenty-seven documents contained in the New Testament. The *Acts of the Apostles,* which is largely concerned with the travels of Paul and is entirely pro-Pauline in content, together with the fourteen letters attributed to him, make up the bulk of the remainder. Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus, however, are generally considered forgeries, while the authenticity of *2 Thessalonians, Colossians* and *Ephesians* is dubious. Nevertheless, Paul remaining letters are probably the most authentic documents in the New Testament, and the picture they present reveals a great deal. But though they communicate much concerning the teachings and character of Paul, they add little to an understanding of what Jesus taught. Written during the 50s and 60s, before the gospels had been compiled, Paul never quotes Jesus. On his own admission, his teaching was from within his own self. Paul himself believed that he had received it all from "Jesus Christ" – Jesus the Messiah – in a "revelation". An alternative point of view would be that it was simply the product of his own somewhat overheated mind:

> But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.
>
> *Galatians 1:11–12, KJV*

Even so, Paul is central to the evolution of Christian history and dogma because it is from the groups he founded that Christianity came into existence as a religion. He himself admits that he was only a youth at the time of Jesus' death. He had never met Jesus, or been baptized or initiated by him. On the contrary, he claimed to have received his baptism directly from the Holy Spirit in a highly personalized way, for which there is only his word and his interpretation of what happened to him. He rarely makes any reference to Jesus' teachings in his letters; he does not appear to even know about the story of the virgin birth, let alone believe in it; and he is at odds with Peter and James the brother of Jesus, meeting them on only three occasions, on one of which, in Antioch, he upbraids Peter in public. Moreover, since the only available literature is *Acts* or Paul's letters, only Paul's side of the story is ever related.

What these sources do reveal is something of his own background. Paul came from a Jewish family of Tarsus. To the Philippians, he wrote that he was a Pharisee, and in *Acts* he says that he was "a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee",[52] also that he "lived in accordance with the strictest section of our faith, as a Pharisee".[53] His father, however, had received Roman citizenship, making Paul a Roman citizen by birth.[54] A "sister's son" is also mentioned in *Acts,* when he informs Paul and the Roman tribune at Jerusalem of a Jewish plot against Paul's life.[55]

Neither *Acts* nor Paul's letters give any indication of his physical appearance, but there is a tradition, recorded in the apocryphal *Acts of Paul,* which provides an interesting description, though this document was written more than a hundred years after Paul's death. He is portrayed as

> a man of small stature, thin-haired upon the head, bandy-legged, in good bodily health, with eyebrows joining, and nose somewhat hooked, full of grace: for sometimes he appeared like a man, and sometimes he had the face of an angel.
>
> *Acts of Paul II:3; cf. ANT p.273*

Though meagre in their information concerning Paul's family and social background, *Acts* and Paul's letters do provide considerable information concerning his psychological make-up, and the beliefs that motivated him. By nature, he was a fanatic – or at least a man of extremes – possessing tremendous energy, enthusiasm and zeal. He excelled in his early studies, beyond all his peers, and was frank about his early persecution of the Christians:

> You have heard, of course, of my behaviour when I practised Judaism, how I ruthlessly hounded down God's Community (Church) and ravaged it.
>
> I progressed in Judaism far beyond many Jewish students of my time, for none was more keenly enthusiastic than I to master the traditional lore of my ancestors.
>
> *Galatians 1:13–14, ANTH p.277*

He was also of a mystic disposition, as becomes clear from his letters, and his studies of Pharisaism almost certainly included its more esoteric aspects. In fact, despite his claim to have received all his teachings by "revelation", his thinking was clearly influenced by the mystical concepts and manner of expression of his times. In *Ephesians* and elsewhere, for example, like the gnostics of that period, he speaks of the "principalities and powers *(archons)* in heavenly places",[56] these being the realms and the rulers of the inner creation, the many mansions or heavens.

Paul not only accepted the existence of the heavens, but also the possibility of entering them during human life. This is clearly indicated by the well-known passage in *2 Corinthians,* generally considered autobiographical, where he speaks of "a man in Christ" who was "caught up to the third heaven":

> I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, whether in the body, I cannot tell, or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth. Such an one was caught up to the third heaven.
>
> And I knew such a man (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth), how that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.
>
> *2 Corinthians 12:1–4, KJV*

"Fourteen years ago" would have been around the time of his miraculous 'conversion' or a little after, and it is likely that his experience on the road to Damascus was something of this nature. Such experiences can be very powerful and life-changing, as Paul discovered, though his later interpretation of it – as his authority to go out and evangelize the Gentile world – came from within himself.

Paul's experience of the "third heaven" is an inner experience, and it is clear that he also understood that God is to be found within:

> Know ye not that ye are the temple of God,
> and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?
>
> *1 Corinthians 3:16, KJV*

His conception of the nature of the Son of God was also mystical. Whatever else the Son may have been to him in his understanding of Jesus Christ, he also believed that the Son was the primary, mystic and creative Power by which everything is created:

> For by him (the Son of the Father) were all things created,
> that are in heaven, and that are in earth,
> visible and invisible;
> Whether they be thrones, or dominions,
> or principalities, or powers:
> All things were created by him.
>
> *Colossians 1:16, KJV*

This essentially mystic concept was well understood in both the Greek and Jewish world, where the same creative Power was known as the Wisdom of God (Gk. *Sophia,* He. *Ḥokhmah*). In fact, Paul himself equates this creative Power of God with the Wisdom of God,[57] both terms being synonymous with the Word.

Paul also points out that the struggle of the devotee consists of countering the influence of the inner powers. His understanding of the "devil" is not that of a being made of "flesh and blood", but of a mystic power, of one who rules certain realms of the creation with other powers under him. For Paul, the devil is akin to the higher "principalities" and "powers", and is responsible for the "darkness of this world":[58]

> My brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world.
>
> *Ephesians 6:10–12, KJV*

Many of Paul's ideas were therefore mystical, and in line with the more universal teaching of other mystics. But all in all, Paul's thinking was a mixture, for he also taught what became the orthodox Christian beliefs of the risen Christ, redemption through the suffering of Jesus on the cross, the imminence of the Last Day, the resurrection of the dead, and so on, the latter being a Pharisaic belief, and a matter upon which the Pharisees differed from the Sadducees.

Paul fervently believed that he had been given a mission to convey the teachings of Jesus outside Palestine. In the execution of this mission, he toured extensively throughout the Eastern Mediterranean regions. One of the advantages of the Roman Empire was that the trade and communication routes by land and sea were kept open and more or less free from brigands and pirates. As a consequence, Paul was able to travel widely in Asia Minor, also visiting many areas of what we now call Greece and what was formerly Yugoslavia, including

Thessaly, Macedonia and Rhodes. He also went to Cyprus and Phoenicia – the coastal regions of what are now Lebanon, western Syria and northern Israel.

Wherever he went, Paul seems to have gone out of his way to challenge the local priests and religious leaders by going straight to the temples, synagogues and public places, and speaking out his beliefs in a manner guaranteed to give offence. He seems to have targeted those who were most likely to be hostile to him, particularly the Jewish priestly hierarchy, whom he only succeeded in angering and alienating. As a result, he was often the cause of disturbance and commonly the centre of major or minor riots. Speaking of his hardships, he wrote to the Corinthians:

> My labours have been harder, my terms of imprisonment longer, my floggings beyond all bounds, my risks of death more frequent. Five times I received from the Jews forty strokes less one, three times I have been beaten with Roman rods, once I was stoned, three times shipwrecked, a night and day consigned to the deep. Often I have taken to the road, in peril of rivers, in peril of brigands, in peril from my own nation, in peril from Gentiles, in peril in town, in peril in the country, in peril at sea, in peril from false brothers, in toil and hardship, often sleepless, in hunger and thirst, often fasting, in cold and in nakedness.
>
> *2 Corinthians 11:23–27, ANTH p.314*

More than once, he had to make a rapid exit from some city because of the hatred and unrest he had stirred up. On other occasions he was turned out, sometimes being left for dead. In Damascus, according to *Acts*, he was let down from the walls in a basket (or a crate depending upon the translation), to escape a group of Jews who were waiting by the city gates to murder him.[59] And during his first visit to Jerusalem as a Christian, soon after his conversion, the disciples ultimately had to take him to Caesarea and thence to Tarsus, because of plots against his life by local Jews whom he had antagonized.[60] The original disciples of Jesus living in Jerusalem had never previously encountered such difficulties, and he must have been more than an embarrassment to them, probably endangering all their lives by his fanatical zeal, his argumentative nature and his desire to convert everybody.

According to *Acts*, Paul's last recorded journey was to Rome, as a prisoner of the Roman government. It began with a serious fracas provoked by Paul himself during his second visit to Jerusalem. He had, as was his custom, got himself into a serious dispute involving the high priest and others. The situation was already fraught when the high priest ordered him to be struck upon the mouth for his words of blasphemy. Realizing that the situation was taking a violent turn, Paul tried to create a diversion. By declaring that he was "a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee", believing in the resurrection of the dead, as well as in angels and spirits – neither of which were countenanced by the Sadducees – he set the

Pharisees and the Sadducees against each other. But the turmoil that ensued backfired on Paul, as all sides turned to vent their anger on him.

At this, the senior Roman officer at hand, coming to know that Paul was a Roman citizen, had to extract him by force and take him to the local garrison for safekeeping. From there, hearing that a group of forty Jews had vowed neither to eat nor drink until they had assassinated him, he sent him with a guard of nearly 500 heavily armed men to Felix, the Roman governor at Caesarea.[61] Unsure what to do, but wishing to please the Jews and, according to *Acts*, hoping for a bribe, Felix kept Paul a prisoner for two years, after which Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus.[62]

Festus did his best to resolve the issue, but Paul, still fearing death at the hands of the Jews, exercised his right as a Roman citizen and appealed to Caesar, which meant having his case heard in the Imperial court.[63] Paul was therefore sent to Rome, going by way of Crete, Malta (where they were shipwrecked) and Sicily.[64] What happened to him in Rome is unclear, although, according to tradition, he was executed in the time of Nero. But the irony is that, according to *Acts,* Herod Agrippa, who had been called in by Festus to help him deal with the case, had pointed out to Festus that since the charges really amounted to arguments over religious matters, "This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar."[65]

As observed, one of the most remarkable features of Paul's teaching is that very rarely, if at all, in his extensive letters, does he ever seem to allude specifically to any of the sayings or discourses associated with Jesus through the gospels, or even in any of the gnostic or other non-canonical sources.[66] It is as if Paul had never read any of it or, if he had, was not interested in quoting the one he promoted as Messiah. But unless the gospel teachings never actually originated with Jesus, they must have been extant in some form at that time, and the absence from Paul's letters of almost anything that can be attributed to Jesus can only be accounted for either by Paul's lack of knowledge of it or his lack of interest.

Paul came into frequent contact with Christian groups that existed prior to his endeavours, presumably dating back to the time of Jesus, who had died only twenty years or so before. He also met Peter on at least three occasions, twice in Jerusalem and once in Antioch.[67] Why, then, was it that neither Peter nor any of the other disciples ever gave Paul copies of material they had in writing concerning their Master's teachings? After all, Matthew is supposed to have recorded some of Jesus' sayings, and surely others must have done so too.

Paul's lack of knowledge of Jesus' teachings highlights his relationship with Peter and the other Christians. With his record of Christian persecution, it would be more than understandable if they had not trusted him. According to *Acts,* when Paul first arrived in Jerusalem, none of Jesus' followers wanted anything to do with him.[68] It was only when Barnabas got to know him personally, taking him to the apostles, that any kind of bridge was formed. Yet even Barnabas, though he travelled with Paul for some while, finally parted company with him,

after a serious disagreement concerning who they should take with them on a missionary trip.[69]

As in a number of instances, however, Paul's own account differs from *Acts*. In *Galatians*, he writes that after his vision and conversion on the road to Damascus, his first move was not to visit the apostles, but to go to Arabia, an enigmatic choice of places that has never been satisfactorily explained. Perhaps he spent some time in the solitude of the desert, in prayer and considering his next step, but it was not until three years after his return to Damascus that he went to Jerusalem, where he meets only Peter and James the brother of Jesus, not Barnabas and the other apostles. Of this period in his life, Paul writes:

> But when it pleased God, who ... called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood. Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.
>
> *Galatians 1:15–19, KJV*

Paul's only written record of his contact with Jesus' direct disciples concerns external, Jewish observances. He does not relate any of the things that Peter and the other disciples could have told him of their time with their Master or of Jesus' teachings. He is obsessed only with his own perceived mission to the Gentiles. And he is prepared to quarrel in public with Peter, the one whom Jesus himself appointed to stand in his place.

Other New Testament Letters

Despite Paul's lack of interest in the teachings of Jesus, almost a half of the New Testament is pro-Pauline in its sympathies. Luke and *Acts* occupy a quarter of the New Testament, while the letters attributed to Paul take up a further twenty per cent. It is uncertain, however, whether all of the letters attributed to Paul were actually written by him. Paul himself mentions in *2 Thessalonians* that letters forged in his name were already in circulation:

> Please do not get excited too soon or alarmed by any prediction or rumour or any letter claiming to come from us.
>
> *2 Thessalonians 2:2, JB*

However, the many similarities between *1* and *2 Thessalonians,* as well as some of the dubious additions to *2 Thessalonians,* have led many scholars to suggest that it is actually *2 Thessalonians* which is the forgery! The spurious writer warns against forgeries as a means of establishing the credentials of his own creation.

The other extant letters most commonly identified as forgeries are *Titus*, and *1* and *2 Timothy*. Noting the differences of tone, style and content between these and the main body of Paul's epistles, many scholars have concluded that they were written by a later hand. It is also certain, for the same reasons, that the *Epistle to the Hebrews* was not written by Paul. But while *Hebrews* has no author's name built into it, *Timothy* and *Titus* do. So if they were not written by Paul, the deception was deliberate. A prevalent school of thought also maintains that *Colossians* and *Ephesians* were not written by Paul, but are elaborations on Paul's philosophy by another party.[70]

The authorship of the remaining four letters, *1 Peter*, *2 Peter*, *James* and *Jude*, has been a subject of debate from the very earliest times. Eusebius, writing in the first half of the fourth century, when listing the New Testament texts, says:

> Those that are disputed, yet familiar to most, include the epistles known as *James, Jude* and *2 Peter*, and those called *2* and *3 John*.
>
> *Eusebius, History of the Church 25, HC p.134*

Even *1 Peter*, usually the most readily accepted, has a distinctly Pauline character, echoing Paul's sentiments, statements, beliefs and even wording, including that of an imminent Second Coming. As such, it seems unlikely to have been written by Peter, probably originating with someone trying to gain support for Paul's teachings by putting them in the name of Peter the apostle.

Almost all scholars agree that *2 Peter* is a late forgery, written in the early second century to foster the idea that Peter and Paul ended their days in accord, with Peter acknowledging the doctrines of Paul. To begin with, the letter has similarities to *Jude;* but, more obviously, the author's way of referring to Jesus, his description of Paul's letters as scripture, and his approach to those who have lost faith owing to the delayed arrival of the Second Coming, all point to a late date. Contrary to their author's intentions, by demonstrating the existence of rifts in early Christianity between Pauline groups and others, *1 Peter* and *2 Peter* are actually a convincing witness to the divergence between the teachings of Peter and Paul.

Whether the letter attributed to James, commonly assumed to be James the brother of Jesus, was actually written by him is also considered doubtful by many scholars because of the excellent Greek in which it is written. However, this is based upon the stereotype that Jesus and his followers were unlettered and spoke no Greek, a belief that is no longer tenable; and in any case, the writer could have used a translator. The sincerity and spiritual depth of this letter is not in doubt, and it is unlikely to be a forgery; the question is only over which James was the author, for he is not identified. Its message is simple and spiritual, with no signs of a developed Christology or theology, either of a Pauline or any other variety. Of the four letters, it conveys the most concerning the spiritual character of Jesus' teaching.

The very short letter from Jude, stated to be the "brother of James", could have been written by one of Jesus' brothers, and its tone and content are somewhat different from that of James, making reference to the various Jewish myths. Its subject is the behaviour of certain "ungodly" people, "deceivers" who have come into the community, and it also suggests that the Last Day is imminent. It has little to associate it with the letter of James or, indeed, with Jesus' teachings. From these indications, it would also seem to be a counterfeit, perhaps from the same pen as *2 Peter.*

Apart from the embarrassment to Christianity of discovering forgeries among its scriptural canon, these minor letters might seem of little significance. However, by highlighting the fundamental differences between the teachings of Peter and Paul, they actually reveal a great deal. They attempt to demonstrate that Peter, the one appointed by Jesus to lead the disciples after his death, and who had spent so much time in the personal company of Jesus, simply got it wrong. While Paul, on the other hand, who had never studied the teachings of Jesus, but claimed to have received his doctrine by an inner infusion of the Holy Spirit, was right, even though his primary tenet – the imminence of the Second Coming – turned out to be incorrect. These letters also imply that Jesus lacked sound judgment by appointing someone who had failed to understand him correctly.

From a wider perspective, they also highlight what became clear to modern scholars during the twentieth century with the discovery of ancient gnostic texts – that early Christians were divided into at least two main streams – the Pauline and the gnostic. Therefore, in any appraisal of the mystical side of Jesus' teachings, the gnostic stream needs considerable attention.

Revelations

In the search for the mystical among the teachings of Jesus, one New Testament document remains for consideration – the obscure *Book of Revelation. Revelations* belongs to a category of Jewish literature that developed during the second and first centuries BCE, having its antecedents in the earlier religious writings of Babylonian and Persian times. It was a literary form or style, a means of expression or an art form, which lasted for many centuries, predominating in certain Judaic, as well as Christian and gnostic circles.

In these 'revelations', imagery, metaphor, allegory, symbolism, cipher, numbers, colours and all such devices were used to convey the author's meaning, which often carried an eschatological message. At times, the revelational writing could become like a literary version of a cryptic crossword, where nothing meant quite what it seemed.

The revelational genre commonly consists of a fictitious ascent into the heavenly realms, usually in the company of an angel or some other spiritual being. Sometimes, the supposed recipient of the revelation is one of the patriarchs of old, thereby adding an air of authenticity to the events related. Once in the heavenly realms, the writer is shown certain things revealing either the

structure and nature of the inner creation or concerning physical events about to take place. He or she may also be given instructions to do certain things or to convey particular messages.

A few of these revelations, like the *Ascension of Isaiah* and some of the gnostic tractates, contain interesting esoteric details concerning the heavenly regions. Others use the literary form to promote a prophecy of impending doom, disaster and the Day of Judgment, urging their readers to repent while there is still time. Revelations with purported prophecies of the future were invariably written after the event – an easy way to write prophecy! Some were even used for political or propagandist purposes.

None of these revelational writers, however, was interested in the distant future. Their horizons were circumscribed by their time and place. The attempt to read distant prophecies of the end of the world into such writings is therefore unwise, and certainly not what the original author or authors had in mind.

Writers and artists of all kinds, times and ages have been fond of symbols, but since no literary art form quite like this exists today, most people find the *Book of Revelation* quite impenetrable. Moreover, the difficulty translators of the New Testament have experienced in understanding the Greek text has added further to the confusion. And this is not all, for a source analysis of the text reveals that like the gospels and *Acts,* it too is a compilation. It is put together from at least two sources, with a number of additional interpolations, one of which may originally have been a Jewish revelation, overwritten by a later Christian editor.

There is an excellent illustration among the gnostic writings of the way in which 'revelations' such as this were written. In the significant collection of gnostic texts known as the Nag Hammadi codices, there are two documents where it is clear that one is a Christian overwriting of the other. The earlier document, *Eugnostos the Blessed,* begins as a discourse on mystical subjects, shifting emphasis to become more revelational as it progresses. The second, the *Sophia of Jesus Christ,* is a Christian overwriting of *Eugnostos the Blessed* and is set entirely in the revelational genre. And it is intriguing to observe, almost at first hand, the editing and Christianizing of a non-Christian text, as well as the transformation of a discourse into a 'revelation', put into the mouth of Jesus and given a post-resurrectional setting.

The *Book of Revelation* is organized as a series of visions given variously by a voice or by several different angels, the first vision being the dictation of a letter containing seven messages for the seven churches in Asia Minor. But the text is altogether too complex to attempt a source analysis here. It is, however, of interest in the present context because, despite its oddities and confusions, it contains some salient points of mystic teaching. These appear to have originated from an earlier stratum of Christian teaching or from the mystical milieu of the times, and it may be that one of the sources of this document was written in the apocalyptic style, but stemmed from one who understood mystic teachings.

The acceptance of *Revelations* as a part of the canon was a matter of early debate. The book was never accepted by the Eastern churches as authentic, and is missing from many early New Testament manuscripts. Scholars are also unclear who wrote its various parts. It has been pointed out that although written in very clumsy Greek, the writer thinks in Hebrew,[71] providing significant evidence of a Jewish background. But like all such writings, the author or authors are unknown. Attributed to a 'John' who figures in the text as the one who claims the vision or rather the series of visions, no one is sure whether he has any connection with John the Elder or John the disciple, whether he was an altogether different John, otherwise unknown to history, or whether John was a pseudonym adopted by the last compiler-editor of this strange book.

In its present form, *Revelations* probably originates from the end of the first century, during the period of Domitian persecution, for the writer speaks of his personal persecution. He was probably lucky, for he had only been exiled to the island of Patmos, a Greek island in the Aegean, off the coast of Asia Minor, where he utilized the time to put the book together. That its date is after the first Jewish war and the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE seems clear, for references are made by way of 'prophecy' to events that took place during that war.

Apocryphal Sources

Fortunately, the New Testament is not the sole source of information on the teachings of Jesus. The writings of the early fathers have in many instances survived, presenting largely Pauline points of view. Further, the many other early Christian groups also produced their own literature, some of which has also survived, augmenting understanding of the mystic beliefs of the esoteric side of early Christianity. In particular, a series of *Acts,* written as fictional romances with one or other of the apostles as their central characters, provide insights into the mystic and spiritual teachings attributed to Jesus.

Many of these *Acts* are quite alien to Western literature and the Western mind of the present time. The stories are often allegorical in character, and the teachings are given by way of metaphor and parable. But like John's gospel, though the stories may be allegories, they have historical individuals as their main characters, and the narratives read to some extent as if the events were to be understood as real. The nearest equivalent in modern literature is probably historical fiction, where the fictitious details of the story are fabricated around a historical framework. The difference is that the incidents narrated in these apocryphal writings are often allegories, the main intent of the author being to convey a spiritual message.

These books and others like them were censured, if not hated, by the 'orthodox', especially after Christianity gained political power in the early fourth century when Emperor Constantine adopted it as the Roman state religion. Yet, from the earliest times, the path of inner experience, whether it is called mysti-

cism, gnosticism or by any other name, was associated with the teachings of Jesus, and these writings are a valuable resource in the search for what Jesus really taught. The *Acts of John* and the *Acts of Peter* are good examples of this genre, but of all these apocryphal *Acts* the richest source of spiritual material is undoubtedly the *Acts of Thomas*. For instance:

> You stand in the temporal life,
> and the everlasting life you know not.
> You are troubled by the marriage of corruption,
> and have not become aware of the true marriage.
> You stand clad in robes that grow old,
> and long not for those that are eternal.
> You are proud of this beauty which vanishes,
> and care not about the unsightliness of your (eternal) soul.
> You are proud of (owning) a number of slaves,
> and your own soul from slavery you have not set free.
>
> *Acts of Thomas 135; cf. AAA p.269, ANT p.423, MAA p.232*

The *Acts of Thomas* is a second- or third-century Christian composition of unknown authorship, consisting of tales and discourses, and written as though it were a brief history of the apostle Judas Thomas in India. Scholars are agreed that the majority of the extant manuscripts in Greek were translated from the version in Syriac, a Semitic language akin to Aramaic. Many also consider that the *Acts of Thomas* was originally written in Syriac. M.R. James and others, however, have suggested that the original language of composition was actually Greek, but was rendered into Syriac early on.[72] The original Greek was then lost, except for a few fragments, and the existing Greek manuscripts stem from a retranslation of the Syriac back into Greek.

Whatever the truth of the matter, there are certainly differences between the Greek and Syriac versions, sometimes significant, and though the Syriac can be consulted for verification of the text, there are conclusive indications that the existing Syriac texts come from a line of manuscripts that has seen more editorial tampering from a Christian viewpoint than the Greek texts. Additionally, while the greater part of the text expresses a universal understanding of the mystic path, there are also passages that reflect early Christian practices and beliefs. Consequently, it is difficult to know what the original text might have been and to what extent the existing text has been 'corrected' by later editors. Like so many ancient writings, the *Acts of Thomas* should therefore be approached with an understanding of its uncertain provenance.

Perhaps the most lyrical and purely mystical of the early Christian texts is the *Odes of Solomon* – a collection of forty-one devotional and often ecstatic poems in praise of God, the Word and the Saviour:

The blessed have joy within their hearts,
  and light from Him who dwells in them,
  and the Word of Truth which is self-existent.
And they receive their strength
  from the holy Power of the Most High:
He who rests unchanging for ever and ever.

Odes of Solomon 32:1–3

Draw for yourselves water
  from the Living Spring of the Lord,
  because it has been opened to you.
Come, all you who thirst, and take a draught,
  and rest beside the Spring of the Lord.
For fair it is and pure,
  and gives rest to the soul.

Sweeter by far than honey are its waters,
  and the honeycomb of bees cannot be compared with it;
Because it flows forth from the lips of the Lord,
  and from the heart of the Lord is its Name.

And it came unhindered and unseen,
  but until it sprang up within them,
  men knew it not.
Blessed are they who have drunk from it,
  and have found rest thereby.

Odes of Solomon 30:1–7

The origin of the *Odes* is again uncertain, but they are thought to have come from the earliest Christian period, maybe stemming from the time of Jesus or even before. Their expression of mystical truths employs literary images also found in the Jewish Wisdom literature and the psalms found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, as well as in Christian, Mandaean and Manichaean writings. The *Odes* are extant in both Syriac and Greek, and although exhibiting an undoubted Semitic influence, scholars are divided as to which was the original language.

Also significant among these ancient texts is the pseudo-Clementine literature, of which only the *Clementine Recognitions,* the *Clementine Homilies* and two *Epitomes* have survived. Of these, the *Recognitions* and the *Homilies* are the most interesting. The two books are actually variants of each other, though there is no scholarly consensus on which was written first or on the relationship between the two. In fact, it is probable that both of them are based upon earlier material, now lost. The authorship is attributed in the books themselves to Clement, Bishop of Rome during the closing years of the first century, who is

said to have sent them to James the brother of Jesus in Jerusalem; but this is usually considered to be a part of the fiction. The *Homilies* are also prefaced with two letters to James from Clement and Peter.

The story consists of a spiritual romance, told by Clement in the first person, describing his travels in the East in the company of Peter. The plot provides a well-executed and entertaining framework, while much of the text is taken up with the various discourses of Peter on spiritual and mystical matters. He speaks, for instance, of

> the key of the kingdom, which is (mystic) knowledge *(gnosis)*, which alone can open the gate of life, through which alone is the entrance to eternal life.
>
> *Clementine Homilies III:18, P2 col. 124, CH p.64*

And referring to the means of mystic knowledge, the writer of the *Clementine Homilies* says that the Saviour, the "faultless prophet", the perfect mystic, in this case Jesus, sees and knows all things through the "boundless eye of his soul":

> For, being a faultless prophet, and looking upon all things with the boundless eye of his soul, he knows hidden things.
>
> *Clementine Homilies III:13, CH p.62*

The date of composition of the Clementine literature is uncertain, scholarly opinion varying from the first to the fourth century, and even later. But in their present form, the *Recognitions* were probably written between 211 and 231 CE, for they refer to the extension of the Roman franchise that took place throughout the empire under the Emperor Caracalla (211–217 CE), and they are also quoted by the third-century Christian teacher, Origen (*c.*185–254) in his *Commentary on Genesis,* written in 231.

Both works were written in Greek, but the original text of the *Recognitions* has been lost, and is preserved in a Latin translation made by Rufinus (*fl.*395–400), together with a translation in Syriac. Rufinus claims to have made a fair translation, only omitting those portions that were difficult to understand. But he is notorious as a ruthless editor and 'corrector' of texts, and the extent of his tampering is difficult to determine. This means that the *Clementine Homilies* is likely to be the more authentic text.

At face value, the Clementine writings reveal something of the Judaeo-Christian side of early Christianity and, if this is genuinely their provenance, then they are the only works to do so. But whatever their origins, and despite interpolations and editorial modifications, they clearly stem from a mystic school of thought and contain some interesting material.

Early Christianity was comprised of many interconnected streams and substreams, reflecting the different groups that came into being after the death of Jesus. One such group was the early Judaeo-Christians of Palestine, often

called the *Ebionim*. Although they must have been the closest to Jesus' original teachings, little is known of them. Apart, perhaps, from the Clementine literature, practically none of their writings have survived and, by the end of the first century, the *Ebionim* had all but vanished. Then there were the gnostic schools whose place in the history of early Christian mysticism is so significant that they are separately discussed. Many of the gnostic teachers claimed descent from the original disciples of Jesus. If their claims were correct, then the Judaeo-Christians, Jesus' original followers in Syria and Asia Minor, and the gnostics should all be regarded as one group. Certainly, by the end of the first century, the gnostics represented the main mystical or esoteric movement in early Christianity. But alongside gnostic Christianity, there was Pauline Christianity, which – having adopted an evangelical and proselytizing character from the outset – ultimately became the orthodox Church, though split into many factions from an early date.

Traditional Christian Mysticism

Within all these movements, there were those of a devotional and mystical temperament. Jesus and his direct disciples would have been the first 'Christian' mystics, but very little is really known of them. Then there were the gnostics whose teachings were undoubtedly mystical, but who were castigated and persecuted by the organized Church as heretics, every effort being made to destroy their literature. The earliest mystics, therefore, who were accepted as such by the orthodox stream were probably the desert fathers, ascetics who flourished in the deserts of fourth-century Egypt and Syria. They were the beginnings of the monastic movement.

The father of Christian monasticism is generally said to have been the Egyptian hermit, Antony the Great (*c.*251–356). The son of wealthy parents, but orphaned while still a child, Antony gave away his wealth at the age of twenty, joining a group of ascetics near his home village. Seeking greater solitude, he gradually moved deeper into the desert, but his fame spread, and many sought him out for his advice and blessings. Disciples also flocked to him, forming small desert colonies that Antony shepherded into the first communities of Christian monks. His biography was written in the fourth century by Athanasius (*c.*296–373), and is still the primary source of information about him, together with seven letters attributed to him. Pachomius (*c.*290–346), building on the enthusiasm generated by Antony, founded the first Christian monastery in 318. Later that same century, Basil the Great (*fl.*379), Bishop of Caesarea, brought monasticism to the towns and cities by introducing charitable work as an acceptable monastic discipline.

The desert fathers and other holy men of the Eastern Church became the spiritual mentors of Eastern Christianity whose last remaining stronghold in modern times is the Orthodox Christian tradition. Their writings are preserved in collected form in the *Philokalia,* an eighteenth-century Greek compilation of

writings dating from the fourth to the fifteenth centuries, brought together by two Greek monks, Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain of Athos (1749–1809) and Makarios of Corinth (1731–1805). First published in Venice in 1782, a second edition, with additional material on prayer by Patriarch Kallistos, was published in Athens in 1893, followed by a third five-volume edition, also published in Athens from 1957 to 1963.

Running parallel with the ascetic stream were the early fathers such as the Clement of Alexandria (*c.*150–215), founder of the first school for Christian converts; his successor, Origen (*c.*185–254); and Augustine (354–430), Bishop of Hippo. These were men of a deeply mystical as well as scholarly disposition, who helped lay the foundations of what became orthodox Christian theology. The founding of Western monasticism, from which so many great mystics have come, was primarily the work of the sixth-century Benedict of Nursia, whose Benedictine rule formed the basis of monastic life until the twelfth century. Among the principal monastic orders which came into being during the Middle Ages were the Carthusians (C11th), the Cistercians (C12th), and the mendicant orders of friars of the thirteenth century – the Dominicans, the Franciscans and the Carmelites.

Monasticism has been an essential part of both the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox traditions from the earliest times to the present, being reformed and revitalized from time to time by various personalities with something new or more modern to offer. In the sixteenth century, monasticism was rejected by the Reformation and the subsequent Protestantism that came into being, although a number of monastic orders have been sponsored by the Anglican Church since the nineteenth century.

It is from the Western monastic tradition that the majority of those more commonly described as Christian mystics have emerged. Many were also significant writers, spiritual guides and interpreters of biblical texts, thus adding to the wealth of Christian literature on the mystical or contemplative life. Interestingly, a great many of them also lived during the eleventh to the seventeenth centuries – a heyday of mysticism in all the world religions. Well-known personalities who have contributed to this tradition include:

Bernard of Clairvaux (*c.*1090–1153)
Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179)
Francis of Assisi (*c.*1181–1226)
Mechthild of Magdeburg (*c.*1210–1297)
Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274)
Ramón Lull (*c.*1235–1315)
Angela of Foligno (1248–1309)
Meister Eckhart (*c.*1260–1327)
Johan Tauler (1290–1361)
Henry Suso (*c.*1295–1366)
Walter Hilton (*d.*1396)
Jean Gerson (1363–1429)
Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556)
Teresa of Ávila (1515–1582)
Luis de León (1527–1591)
Marina de Escobar (1554–1633)
Alvarez de Paz (1560–1620)
John of the Cross (1542–1591)
François de Sales (1567–1622)
Jakob Boehme (1575–1624)

Richard Rolle (*c.*1300–1349)
Thomas à Kempis (1379–1471)
Margery Kempe (*fl.*1390)
George Herbert (1593–1633)
Brother Lawrence (1611–1691)
Angelus Silesius (C17th)

These mystics and those of the early Church have expressed the universal truths of spirituality within the framework of their Christian belief, and a very small selection of their voluminous writings is considered here. Although the spiritual journey begins in this world, Bernard of Clairvaux points out, along with so many other mystics, that the body is only a temporary "dwelling place":

> Our bodily dwelling place … is neither a citizen's residence nor one's native home, but rather a soldier's tent or traveller's hut. This body … is a tent … that now intervenes to deprive the soul for a while of the vision of the infinite Light.
>
> *Bernard of Clairvaux, On the Song of Songs 26:1, WBC2 p.59*

Even so, Pope Gregory the Great (*c.*540–604) insists that eternity is accessible in this life to the devotees or "saints":

> The saints enter eternity even in this life, beholding the eternity of God.
>
> *Gregory the Great, Morals 8, in CWJC1 p.117 (n.3)*

This is possible, says Gregory of Nyssa (*c.*335–395), because

> we have two sets of senses, one corporeal and the other spiritual.
>
> *Gregory of Nyssa, On Canticles 1, GGG p.156*

And he speaks of

> the sound of a Voice that calls the soul through its spiritual sense of hearing to a contemplation of the mysteries.
>
> *Gregory of Nyssa, On Canticles 5, GGG p.199*

Likewise, writes Alvarez de Paz, the spiritual eyes of the soul can see the divine light within when absorbed in inner contemplation:

> In this degree (of contemplation) … eyes are given unto the soul by which she may see God.… When you see light with the bodily eyes, you do not arrive thereat by a comparison of ideas, as when we say: "Light is not darkness" or "It is a quality." You simply see light.
>
> In the same way, the soul in this degree of contemplation affirms nothing, denies nothing, attributes nothing, avoids nothing, but in complete repose she sees God. It will be said: this is astonishing, or rather unbelievable.… I admit that it is astonishing. The fact, however, is very certain.…

> In this supernatural manner, the soul knows God in the depths of her being, and she sees Him, so to say, more clearly than she sees the material light with the eyes of the body.... This sight (of God) inflames the soul with a very ardent love.... Neither the senses, nor the imagination, have the least part in this vision; all takes place in the summit of the spirit.
>
> *Alvarez de Paz, IPSO V:3.14, in GIP p.282*

Such experiences are clearly infused with a deep spiritual enlightenment. Origen, however, points out that the inner senses do not open until all material desires and imperfections have left the soul:

> The soul is not made one with the Word of God, and joined to Him, until such time as all the winter of her personal disorders and the storm of her vices has passed.... When, therefore, all these things have gone out of the soul, and the tempest of desires has fled from her, then the flowers of the virtues can begin to burgeon in her.
>
> *Origen, On the Song of Songs 3:14, OSS p.240*

Then, when purified, the soul is drawn up towards God, and all the knowledge of this world, says John of the Cross, is revealed as ignorance:

> The draught of the highest wisdom of God makes her (the soul) ... forget all the things of the world.... It seems to the soul that its former knowledge, and even the knowledge of the whole world, is pure ignorance by comparison with that knowledge....
>
> The soul that is led into this highest knowledge knows thereby that all that other knowledge, which has naught in common with this knowledge, is not knowledge but ignorance. And that there is no knowledge to be had from it. And the soul declares the truth of the saying of the Apostle (Paul), namely, that that which is greatest wisdom in the sight of men is foolishness in God's sight.[73] ... Because the soul is in that exceeding high wisdom of God, ... therefore the lowly wisdom of men is ignorance to it. For the natural sciences themselves, and the very works that are done by God, are as ignorance compared with knowing God. For, where God is not known, naught is known.
>
> *John of the Cross, Spiritual Canticle XXVI:13, CWJC2 pp.315–16*

In this state, he says, the soul is full of a "marvellous sweetness":

> In this divine union, the soul sees and tastes abundance, inestimable riches, finds all the rest and the recreation that it desires, and understands strange kinds of knowledge and secrets of God, which is another of those kinds of food that it likes best.

> It feels likewise in God, an awful (*i.e.* awesome) power and strength which transcends all other power and strength. It tastes a marvellous sweetness and spiritual delight, finds true rest and divine light, and has lofty experience of the knowledge of God....
>
> Likewise it feels itself to be full of good things, and far withdrawn from evil things and empty of them. And, above all, it experiences and has fruition of an inestimable feast of love which confirms it in love.
>
> *John of the Cross, Spiritual Canticle XIV-XV:4, CWJC2 pp.248*

In such experiences, records Marina de Escobar, the soul is in "a deep ecstasy" and "filled ... with His light":

> When in a deep ecstasy, God unites the soul suddenly to His essence, and when He fills her with His light, He shows her in a moment of time the sublimest mysteries. And the soul sees a certain immensity and an infinite majesty.... The soul is then plunged, as it were, into a vast ocean which is God and again God. It can neither find a foothold nor touch the bottom. The divine attributes appear as summed up in one whole, so that no one of them can be distinguished separately.
>
> *Marina de Escobar, Life, VME2 II:34, in GIP pp.275–76*

But, says Basil the Great (*c.*329–379), this state is "inexpressible":

> The radiance of divine beauty is wholly inexpressible: words cannot describe it, nor the ear grasp it. To compare the true (divine) Light to the rays of the morning star or the brightness of the moon or the light of the sun is to fail totally to do justice to its glory, and is as inadequate as comparing a pitch-black moonless night to the clearest of noons.
>
> *Basil the Great, Longer Rules 337c–d, P31 cols. 909–10, PCT2 p.356; cf. AWB p.154*

It is, as Francis of Assisi says, a state of divine ecstasy and love:

> I am dying of sweetness,
> do not marvel at it.
>
> *Francis of Assisi, Canticle of the Furnace, WFA p.120*

1.6 Gnosticism

The designation 'gnosticism' stems from the Greek word, *gnosis*. Literally meaning 'knowledge', *gnosis* refers to spiritual or mystical knowledge which is personal, revelational and self-evident. Essentially, *gnosis* means mystical experience. The gnostics were – and are – those who sought that kind of experience.

Often linked with Christianity in the popular mind, the first flourishing of gnosticism is generally associated with the first two centuries of the Christian era. However, there have actually been many different gnostic schools in Judaism, Christianity, Hellenistic thought, and also, later, in Islam. Gnosticism, especially of the early Christian period, is generally characterized by a belief that the soul has fallen into the bondage of matter where it is held captive until rescued by a Saviour:

> Release yourselves,
> and that which has bound you will be dissolved.
> Save yourselves, so that your soul may be saved.
> The kind Father has sent you the Saviour,
> and given you strength.
> Why are you hesitating?
> Seek when you are sought;
> When you are invited, listen,
> for time is short.
>
> *Zostrianos 131, NHS31 pp.222–23*

The soul then receives from the Saviour a mystic baptism or initiation into the *Logos,* the primal creative Power of God, at which time the binding cords of fate or destiny are transferred from the administration of the "evil principalities" into the hands of the Saviour. Then, through meditation practices taught by the Saviour, the soul regains true *gnosis,* true knowledge, experience or mystic revelation both of itself and of God, and returns to Him:

> Baptism is called death and an end of the old life, when we take leave of the evil principalities, but it is also called "life" according to Christ.... But the power of the transformation of him who is baptized does not concern the body, but the soul....
>
> Until baptism, they say, fate is real, but after it the astrologers are no longer right. But it is not only the washing (of baptism) that is liberating, but the knowledge of who we were, and what we have become, where we were or where we were placed, whither we hasten, from what we are redeemed, what birth is, and what rebirth.
>
> *Theodotus, Excerpta ex Theodoto 77–78; cf. ETCA pp.88–89*

This quest for God's "kingdom" and knowledge of the self take place within:

> Jesus said,
> "If those who lead you say to you,
> 'See, the kingdom is in the sky',
> then the birds of the sky will precede you.

If they say to you, 'It is in the sea',
then the fish will precede you.
Rather, the kingdom is inside of you,
and it is outside of you.

"When you come to know yourselves,
then you will become known,
and you will realize that it is you
who are the sons of the Living Father.
But if you will not know yourselves,
you dwell in (spiritual) poverty,
and it is you who are that poverty."

Gospel of Thomas 32–33:3, NHS20 pp.52–55

Also characteristic of gnostic teachings are an understanding of the Saviour as a manifestation of the *Logos,* as well as a belief in reincarnation and an intermediate creator of the material and higher worlds, together with a hierarchy of lesser deities or *archons* (rulers) in the administration of creation. Gnostic texts commonly refer to this lesser creator, his *archons* and the realms over which they rule (the "principalities") as evil or negative, in contrast to the positive power of God and His eternity.

In common with other followers of the mystic path, many gnostics were also vegetarian and, among the early Christian gnostics, many also understood such doctrines as resurrection in a spiritual rather than a literal manner. They sought the immortality of the soul while they lived, rather than awaiting a final Day of Judgment.

The need for a Saviour was foremost in their minds, and it is clear from gnostic texts that many early Christians regarded Jesus as a gnostic Saviour. But there were other contemporary spiritual teachers, giving rise to a debate, often heated, as to who was or had been a true Saviour and who false. The mid-first-century Simon Magus, a Samaritan mentioned in *Acts*[74] and a contemporary of Jesus, was commonly targeted by the early Christians as a false Saviour. That this was an issue highlights the fact that there were considerable similarities between the teachings of Jesus and the gnostics, demonstrating the mystical character of Jesus' teachings. In fact, Simon is said in *Acts* to have received "baptism",[75] and in the *Clementine Homilies* and *Clementine Recognitions* to have been a successor to John the Baptist.[76]

Simon Magus was charged with being a 'magician' or 'sorcerer', a lesser mystic, said to resort to the performance of 'lower-order' miracles in order to convince people. Both Jesus[77] and Simon were also, in their turn, accused of being messengers of Satan, rather than the supreme Lord. In the *Clementine Homilies,* the *Clementine Recognitions,* the *Acts of Peter,* and other similar literature, Simon Magus and Peter are portrayed as being in debate or contention

with each other. As in the stories of warring Greek gods, familiar to many of those times, Simon performs extravagant miracles, flying through the air, rolling on burning coals and so on, while Peter derides such a display. Since these texts promote Peter's point of view, his teachings and behaviour are always depicted as superior to those of Simon, yet the second-century Christian heresiologist, Irenaeus (*c.*120–202), Bishop of Lyons, says that Simon was also considered by his disciples to have been a Saviour and a Son of God.[78] And the mid-second-century Christian father, Justin Martyr (*d.c.*165), reports that Simon had a considerable following in his own time, and even a century later was still worshipped as the "first God" by "almost all the Samaritans and a few even of other nations", particularly in Rome.[79] The real truth of the situation is therefore more or less impossible to determine.

Irenaeus and other early Christian heresiologists mention a number of gnostic teachers, many of whom regarded themselves as Christians.[80] Both Justin Martyr and Irenaeus say that Simon's successor was Menander,[81] followed by Saturninus, Basilidēs and Valentinus.[82] Tracing back the lineage, the fourth-century fathers, Eusebius (*c.*265–340) and Epiphanius (*c.*315–403), intimate that Saturninus in Syria and Basilidēs in Egypt had both been the disciples of Menander or had at least come from the same school.[83] These gnostics had large followings, Basilidēs and Valentinus in particular being well known among the second-century Alexandrian gnostics.

Not only did each gnostic have his own teacher or Master, but many also claimed that they had received their teaching through one or other of the apostles. Clement of Alexandria writes that Basilidēs professed "for his Master, Glaucias, an interpreter of Peter"[84] – a somewhat unclear designation. He also adds that Basilidēs was taught by Matthew, while Hippolytus (*fl.*210–236), Bishop of Rome, has it that

> Basilidēs ... and Isodorus, the true son and disciple of Basilidēs, say that Matthias (not Matthew) communicated to them secret discourses, which, being specially instructed, he heard from the Saviour.
>
> *Hippolytus, Refutation of All Heresies VII:8, RAH p.273*

The history of the mystics, the gnostics and the early Christians of this period is unclear and fragmentary, but the late-second-century father, Hegesippus, wrote that the real splintering began after the martyrdom of James the brother of Jesus (*c.*62 CE), head of the community of disciples at Jerusalem, when different individuals wished to take over the leading position.[85]

Surveying what is known of Christianity's first three centuries, it is generally true that the wide spectrum of belief held by Christians at that time was more or less polarized into two main camps – those who believed that Jesus had taught a primarily mystic, gnostic or esoteric path to God, and those who formed what was later to become orthodox, exoteric Christianity, awaiting the second earthly

coming of Jesus, and founded on the teachings of Paul.[86] Generally speaking, these two streams reflect the spectrum of human nature present at all times, in all cultures and religions. There are those whose primary interest is in externals and those whose primary interest is a personal and more inward reality.

Though there are many mystic and gnostic elements even in the earliest stratum of 'orthodoxy', a number of the early Christian fathers entertained an intense hatred of all gnostic teachers and their philosophy. Gnosticism seemed to challenge their beliefs more than any other intellectual system, theological outlook or difference of opinion within the Church. It must have given them considerable feelings of insecurity, for a number of them devoted significant efforts to decrying the gnostics. Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Tertullian (*fl.*190–220), Epiphanius and Ephraim Syrus (*c.*306–373), in particular, all wrote long treatises condemning the gnostics and their teachings. Later Christian authorities also did their best to destroy the writings of the 'heretics'. Indeed, so successful were they that until the late nineteenth century the treatises of the heresiologists remained the major source of information on the gnostics.

The information they conveyed, however, is often questionable, since they were more interested in debunking rather than understanding. Of them all, the accounts of Irenaeus are generally the most accurate; but like the others even his writings are redolent with scorn, prejudice and misrepresentation. Only when some passage is quoted in order to ridicule or refute it, is it possible to gauge more precisely what the original writer had in mind. Even so, much can be gleaned that is interesting, though often tantalizing in its deficiencies, and it is through these early writers that some knowledge of this side of Christian belief was preserved.

And so the situation might have remained had it not been for the remarkable discovery of some significant manuscripts during the last century and a half. In the latter part of the nineteenth and in the early twentieth century, a few gnostic manuscripts, written in Coptic, turned up in the antiquarian bazaars of Cairo, found no doubt in the dry Egyptian desert areas. Then, in December 1945, on the east bank of the Nile, in the Naj' Hammadi region of Upper Egypt, not far from the ancient city of Chenoboskia, two brothers, digging out nitrogenous earth to fertilize their fields, found an earthenware pot, sealed with bitumen. Inside were twelve papyrus codices entirely devoted to gnostic teachings. Among these were many tractates that dealt specifically with Jesus' teachings, notably the *Gospel of Thomas* (being a collection of Jesus' sayings), the *Gospel of Philip* (a collection of interesting miscellanies giving a mystic interpretation of Jesus' teachings), and a number of other texts presenting Jesus' teachings in a mystic or gnostic light. Dates found on letters and business documents used to thicken the leather covers of one of the codices are 341, 345 and 348 CE, indicating that the production of the volumes happened prior to 341. From the contents of the tractates, it is likely that they were written at various times between the first and fourth centuries.

At the time of their burial, there must have been many more such writings in existence and many people have speculated as to why they were copied into these volumes and secreted. The most probable answer is that some far-sighted individual, realizing that the orthodox were closing in, wished to preserve something of universal spiritual value for posterity. Burying books in sealed jars was standard practice at such times, even mentioned in the Bible, in *Jeremiah.*[87] The foresight and labour of those involved in the copying and the burial has been vindicated: for the first time in many centuries the 'heretics' have been enabled to speak for themselves.

These twelve codices, now known as the Nag Hammadi library or Nag Hammadi codices, contain a total of fifty-two gnostic tractates, of which six are duplicates and six were already extant at the time of the find, including a collection of the sayings of Jesus in the *Gospel of Thomas* and a brief excerpt from Plato's *Republic.* Of the forty new tractates, about thirty are in a good or reasonable state of preservation, the remaining ten being more or less fragmentary. These gnostic texts, together with the few previous finds from Egypt, plus gleanings from the writings of the heresy-hunting fathers, represent the entire extant remains of gnostic teachings, with the exception of the more extensive Mandaean and Manichaean literature.

1.7 THE MANDAEANS

The Mandaeans were a gnostic sect of Jewish origin who migrated to Mesopotamia in pre- or early Christian times. Surviving until the middle of the twentieth century as the last remaining gnostic sect, they lived in the marshlands of Iran and Iraq. They acknowledged John the Baptist and many other mystics (some biblical, some mythical) as Saviours. The earliest Mandaeans were also vegetarian and drank no alcohol.

One of the greatest twentieth-century authorities on the Mandaeans, based on her own first-hand study, was Lady E.S. Drower. In one of her many books on the subject, she writes:

> By the rivers of Iraq and especially in the alluvial land of al-Khaur where the Tigris and the Euphrates squander their waters in the marshes, meeting and mating at Qurnah before they flow into the Persian Gulf, and in the lowland of Persia along the Karun, which like its two sister rivers empties into the Gulf, there dwells the remnant of a handsome people who call themselves *Mandaiia,* Mandaeans (*lit.* gnostics), and speak a dialect of Aramaic. When the armies of Islam vanquished the Sassanids, they were already there and in such numbers that the *Qur'ān* granted them protection as 'People of the Book', calling them 'Sabaeans'.
>
> *E.S. Drower, Secret Adam, SA p.ix*

Writing in 1960, E.S. Drower was one of the last of only a handful of scholars who studied the Mandaeans in detail and, of these, there can have been none who developed such close personal associations as she, spanning a period of more than thirty years. The Mandaeans are – or were – a shy and secretive people, closely guarding their sacred books, and although she was given her first Mandaean book in about 1920, she did not obtain a copy of their 'canonical prayer book' until a return visit in 1954. These books were the personal and private property of the priests and were in constant use. At that time she also observed that, as a separate community, the Mandaeans were languishing. Education of their children in standard government schools had introduced twentieth-century attitudes. The numbers of the faithful were dwindling year by year, and few of the younger generation were interested in entering the priesthood. The knowledge of their religion and its complex ceremonies was therefore dying out and must by now have almost entirely disappeared.[88]

Though the demise of an ancient people is always tinged with sadness, it is their literature that is of the greatest interest in the present context:

> That an ancient gnostic sect should have survived into our time is remarkable; that so many of their writings, their magical texts, their secret doctrine in the ritual scrolls and their liturgical literature has been preserved is little short of a miracle.
>
> *E.S. Drower, Canonical Prayerbook of the Mandaeans, CPM p.viii*

The antiquity of at least part of the Mandaean texts can be determined from Torgny Säve-Söderbergh's discovery that a series of psalms (the *Psalms of Thomas*) in the fourth-century Coptic Manichaean psalm book are adaptations, almost translations, of early Mandaean hymns.[89] Säve-Söderbergh dates them to the last quarter of the second century or earlier.

In addition to the richness of their imagery and the profusion of their texts, these writings are of particular interest for the parallels they present to the New Testament, especially John's gospel. They also reflect the content of other gnostic literature as well as some of the psalms ascribed to the Teacher of Righteousness, found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. The Mandaean acceptance (in two of their codices) of John the Baptist as one among a pantheon of Saviours, some of whom are undoubtedly mythical, is also intriguing, together with the fact that in the same books Jesus is represented as a false prophet, and Mandaean texts are generally antithetical to him.[90]

Until the arrival of Islam in Mesopotamia, seeking converts, Mandaean literature had been diffuse, scattered from place to place. But spurred into action by the influx of a competitive religion, a group of Mandaean reformers collected all the texts they could find and established a definitive body of Mandaean literature, much of which was only available to the priesthood. Existing writings were organized and probably edited in places, instructions for rituals were

inserted into the canonical prayer book, and some new compositions also came into being. A period of strict observance for priesthood and laity then ensued.[91]

The Mandaeans themselves tell their story in semi-legendary form in one of the books written at this later date, preserving what had previously been passed down in the oral tradition. At the time of writing this account, there were two classes in existence. The laity were called the Mandaeans, while the priesthood were the Nāṣoraeans. In the story of their origins, however, the designation Mandaean is used only once, the name for the early members of this group being the Nāṣoraeans.[92]

The original Nāṣoraeans, it is related, were disciples of John the Baptist who fled from Jerusalem owing to persecution, taking refuge in the Median hills and in the city of Harran in the north of Persia where there were fellow members of their faith. The persecutors, says the legend, were later punished by the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 CE, which places their exodus some time before that date, perhaps even in the pre-Christian era, presumably in the time of John the Baptist. There is also evidence that John the Baptist had a far longer and more widespread ministry than is indicated by the brief accounts given in the canonical gospels. In fact, according to a Mandaean tradition, they had once had fellow members in Egypt, and the fourth-century Christian heresiologist, Epiphanius (*c.*315–403), states that there had been "Nasaraeans" in Palestine before the time of Jesus, though whether these were the same as the Nāṣoraeans is uncertain.[93]

Later, under the protection of a friendly Parthian king, some of them migrated south to Lower Mesopotamia. That the Nāṣoraeans of the north were not of Judaic extraction but of the local population, suggests that John the Baptist had a following that had spread beyond the borders of Palestine. Many of the northern group – at least in later times – were among the intelligentsia, some gaining fame as scholars, physicians and so on, in the early Islamic period. However, being a less isolated community than their southern counterparts, they were absorbed into the surrounding culture, and their religion did not survive the passage of time.[94]

It seems likely, therefore, that the Nāṣoraeans – or Mandaeans – originated from the spiritual and gnostic milieu of Palestine that included the Essenes, the *Ebionim* (or Ebionites), the *Ḥasidim,* the Teacher of Righteousness, John the Baptist, Jesus and many others.

1.8 MĀNĪ AND THE MANICHAEANS

Of all the mystics of the early Christian era, the most well known to posterity was Mānī, born around 216 CE, probably in Mesopotamia of Persian parents. Like so many mystics, only a fragmentary history of his life has survived,

embellished by the legends that characteristically surround the memory of past holy men, some of the details being historically conflicting. According to the medieval Arabic scholar, al-Bīrūnī (973–1048 CE), on Mānī's own testimony, his place of birth was the village of Mardinu in what was then northern Babylonia.[95] It also seems that his parents belonged to a royal family and were also spiritually inclined.

Like Jesus, Mānī showed early signs of a mystical disposition. Another medieval Arabic scholar, al-Nadīm (*c.*935–995), records the legend:

> Even when he was young, Mānī spoke with words of wisdom and then, when he was twelve years old, there came to him a revelation. According to his statement, it was from the King of the gardens of light (*i.e.* God).
>
> *Al-Nadīm, Fihrist 9:1, FN2 p.774*

Mānī was commonly described as a 'Messenger' or a 'Sent One', the Greek word being *apostolos* – an Apostle – one of Mānī's commonest designations being the 'Apostle of Light'. Though used by Christianity in a particular sense, the term was used in the Middle East for prophets and mystics, indicating those who have a divine mandate, so to speak, to teach humanity. According to al-Bīrūnī, Mānī was the disciple of Fadarun,[96] of whom nothing else is known. Among Mānī's first disciples were his parents and other influential members of his family.

During his lifetime, Mānī travelled extensively and continuously, and his modern biographers have often observed that he must have been a man of exceptional charisma, also possessing an organizational flair akin to genius for, wherever he went, well-organized centres came into being. He had disciples stretching from northern India, through Persia, Mesopotamia and the Middle East into Egypt, and it seems likely that smaller centres were also founded further afield. Certainly, during the time of his legitimate successors, the community of disciples is known to have stretched from China to Rome.

Mānī enjoyed the patronage of several kings, especially the great ruler of the Persian Empire, King Shāpūr, by whom he was permitted to travel throughout the empire, teaching without hindrance. Two of Shāpūr's brothers also became his followers, and it is likely that their example was followed by many other highly placed individuals in the Persian Empire. But the prevalent religion of this area of the Middle East was Zoroastrianism, the priestly classes being the magi, and there is no doubt that just as the Jewish priests were antagonistic to Jesus, the magi were little enamoured of Mānī's activities, for he put spiritual power directly into the hands of his followers, thereby undermining the role of the priests. Like Jesus, he interpreted the received scriptures differently from the priests. He was, for example, universal in his outlook. In a book dedicated to King Shāpūr, he wrote:

> Wisdom and practice have always from time to time been brought to mankind by the Messengers of God. So in one age they have been brought by the Messenger called Buddha to India, in another by Zaradusht (Zarathushtra) to Persia, in another by Jesus to the West. Thereupon this revelation has come down, this prophecy in this present age through me, Mānī, the Messenger of God of Truth to Babylonia.
>
> *Mānī, Shāhburkān, in al-Bīrūnī, Chronology of Ancient Nations 207; cf. CAN p.190*

Mānī taught that Jesus, the Buddha and Zarathushtra had all been Saviours of their time, but that the way to God lay through a living teacher. The power that confers salvation, he said, was the *Logos,* the Creative Word, which he also called the *Nous* of Light, the *Vahman* and by other names. Mānī also taught reincarnation, saying that until such time as a soul comes into contact with a Saviour, it remains in the labyrinth of birth and death, taking repeated births in this world under the influence of its past actions and desires. As a Manichaean devotee writes:

> Who will release me from all the pits and prisons,
> in which are gathered lusts that are not pleasing?
> Who will take me over the flood of the tossing sea –
> the zone of conflict in which there is no rest?
> Who will save me from the jaws of all the beasts
> who destroy and terrify one another without pity? …
> Who will lead me beyond rebirths, and free me from them all –
> and from all the waves, in which there is no rest?
> I weep for my soul, saying: may I be saved from this,
> and from the terror of the beasts who devour one another!
>
> The bodies of men, and of birds of the air,
> of fish of the sea, and four-footed creatures and of all insects –
> Who will take me beyond these and save me from them all,
> so that I shall not turn and fall into the perdition of those hells?
> So that I shall not pass through defilement in them,
> nor return in rebirth.
>
> *Manichaean Hymns, Huwīdagmān IVa:1–3, 5–9, MHCP pp.80–83*

And the devotee answers in the name of the Saviour:

> I shall take you with might, and enfold you with love,
> and lead you to your home, the blessed abode.
> Forever shall I show to you the noble Father;
> I shall lead you in, into His presence, in pure raiment.
>
> *Manichaean Hymns, Angad Rōshnān VI:67–68; cf. MHCP pp.152–53*

Al-Bīrūnī also comments, "He (Mānī) maintained that he had explained *in extenso* what had only been hinted at by the Messiah (Jesus)."[97]

Although the magi were hostile to Mānī, there was little they could do, since he enjoyed the patronage of the king and other highly placed people. But in 272 CE, after a reign of thirty years, Shāpūr died, being succeeded by his son, Hormizd. Hormizd held Mānī in the same esteem as his father, but he was to rule for just one year, being succeeded on his death by his brother Bahrām, who ruled from 273 to 276.

Bahrām was hostile to Mānī, but did not act until three years after his succession to the throne, though he must have been keeping a close watch upon Mānī through his 'intelligence network', a familiar practice then as now. Mānī had been journeying down the lower Tigris, visiting his centres on either side of the great river, and was intending to travel on further eastwards through Persia and into the realm of the Kushāṇas, to centres at Kābul and Gandhāra (now Afghanistan and northwest Pakistan). The Kushāṇas were Buddhists and the chief tribe of the Yüèh Chì people of China, ruling over much of what is now northern India, Afghanistan and Central Asia during the first three centuries CE.

This was an area where Shāpūr's protection and support had been of great value to Mānī in the past, but at this juncture a royal veto upon his further travels reached him from Bahrām. Mānī turned back, and he must have known what was awaiting him on his return, for according to a Coptic description of Mānī's journey home, he counselled the disciples he met as he travelled, "Look on me and take your fill, my children; for bodily, I shall depart from you."[98]

Reaching his native Mesopotamia, Mānī received orders from Bahrām to present himself at the royal court. In the meantime, according to the Coptic text, the magi had prepared a *libellus,* a bill of impeachment which contained the accusation, "Mānī has taught against our law,"[99] – the Zoroastrian faith, like Judaism, being commonly known as the 'law'. On Mānī's arrival, Bahrām was about to leave on a hunting trip, and an impromptu hearing was arranged. But the king had already made up his mind as to the outcome. On seeing Mānī, according to the fragmentary remains of both a Coptic and Middle Persian text, he stormed:

> "You are *not* welcome!"
>
> But the Lord answered, "Why? Have I done anything evil?"
>
> The king said, "I have sworn an oath not to leave you in this land." And in an outburst of rage he thus addressed the Lord: "Ah, what need is there of you, since you neither go to war nor go hunting?"
>
> *Manichaean Text, RMP n; cf. GSR p.214, MM pp.39–40*

Mānī was put into triple chains – three around his wrists, three around his ankles and one around his neck – a harsh shackling well known from records of the early Christian martyrs. A month later he died, the year being 276 CE. Al-Bīrūnī

writes that he "died in prison" and "His head was exposed before the entrance of the royal tent, and his body was thrown into the street, that he should be a warning example to others."[100] Al-Nadīm repeats the story, also observing that some say he was executed, and his body cut in two, the two halves being gibbeted on separate gates of the king's capital of Jundī-Shāpūr. The far earlier Coptic manuscripts say that he died in prison, that his body was cut up, and that his severed head was exhibited at one of the city gates.[101]

Although very little remains from Mānī's apparently prolific pen, there is enough among the writings of his followers to demonstrate that his teachings were specifically mystic. This literature also provides considerable insight into the mystical interpretation Mānī gave of Jesus' teachings.

One of the most significant texts is a Coptic psalm book, found by Professor Carl Schmidt in 1930 in the bazaars of Cairo.[102] Probably dating from the fourth century, it includes translations and versions of material that may have originated at a much earlier date. This priceless volume contains devotional writings of a mystic nature praising both Mānī and Jesus as mystic Saviours, often in the same psalm.

The psalm book seems to have been part of a cache of Manichaean texts in Coptic found in a wooden chest among the ruins of an old house in Medinet Madi, to the southwest of al-Fayyūm in Middle Egypt. Broken up before reaching the Cairo market, the collection comprised seven codices: *The Kephalaia of the Teacher,* the *Epistles* of Mānī, the *Acts* (a history of Mānī and the early community), the *Synaxeis of the Living Gospel,* the *Psalm Book,* a collection of *Homilies,* and the *Kephalaia of My Lord Mānī.* These codices were divided between Berlin and London, and work commenced on their publication and translation. The advent of war, however, put an end to this endeavour, and some of the texts stored in the Soviet sector of Berlin have been partially lost. Specifically, only portions of the *Acts* and the *Epistles* have survived, and parts of the *Kephalaia of My Lord Mānī* are also missing. In recent years, the work of publication and translation has recommenced, but apart from the second part of the *Psalm Book* and the *Kephalaia of the Teacher,* none of the texts have yet been translated in their entirety into English.

A great many texts in seventeen languages were also collected by four German expeditions, during the period 1902–14, to the ruins of the ancient towns on the borders of the Takla Makan desert in Chinese Turkestan, Central Asia, 500 miles or so to the north of Afghanistan and far to the west of the Gobi desert. Referring to the main site where these texts were found, they were known as the Turfan expeditions. Under the leadership of Albert Grunwedel and Albert von Le Coq, these expeditions returned to Berlin with large numbers of documents, not only of Manichaean, but also of Christian and Buddhist provenance. Of these Turfan texts, comparable in importance with the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi library, only about a quarter have so far been published, the remaining material being fragmentary, still requiring considerable piecing together.

Included among the published and translated texts are Manichaean hymns and texts in Parthian, Middle Persian, Old Turkish, Sogdian and Chinese.

The religion that formed after the departure of Mānī and his successors (about whom little is known), vibrant with the fresh influx of spirituality and unencumbered by the stultifying organization that had swamped and smothered the Christian Church, spread rapidly throughout Persia, Mesopotamia and the Roman Empire. Centres had been established from China to Rome and, as the direct disciples died, the religion no doubt formed around their heirs, just as it had earlier done around the descendants of Jesus and John the Baptist's disciples.

The timing, however, coincided with Christianity's rise to power, and the Christian authorities included the Manichaeans among their targets of heresy eradication, for Mānī had given a mystical interpretation of Jesus' sayings and parables that was contrary to orthodox belief. At certain times and in some places, Manichaeism even threatened to replace Christianity as the major religion, and the response of the Christian authorities was severe. The story is a long and violent one, far removed from the teachings of Jesus, and the last remnants of the Manichaeans (in southern France) were not wiped out until medieval times by the soldiers of the Inquisition. It is because of this suppression that the writings of Mānī and the Manichaeans are now in short supply.[103]

1.9 Greek Mystics and Philosophers

In modern times, the ancient Greek philosophers have largely been regarded as intellectuals, forerunners of the post-Renaissance, Western philosophical tradition. In more ancient times, however, a number of these philosophers were understood more specifically as mystics. In fact, fragmentary as the extant source literature may often be, the basic tenets of the mystic path are present in their writings. The *Logos* or the *Nous* as the divine creative power, the idea of the enlightened sage, meditation, reincarnation, vegetarianism, the pursuit of human virtue and perfection, along with other primary aspects of the mystic path are all given prominence. Indeed, the word 'philosopher' (Gk. *philosophos*) means a 'lover of wisdom', wisdom here meaning spiritual or mystic wisdom.

Orpheus

The story starts with Orpheus, son of the Thracian king, Oeagrus, and the Muse Calliopē. A figure surrounded more by myth than history, Orpheus was regarded for more than two millennia as the authority to whom many religious and philosophical groups in the Hellenic world appealed for authentication of their beliefs. It is unlikely, however, that he actually composed any of the poems and hymns attributed to him. Indeed, most of them can be reliably dated to far later times, and many writers probably wrote quite honestly in the tradition they

considered to be that of Orpheus, ascribing their writings to him as a traditional authority, a common literary custom in the ancient world.

Scholars are understandably reluctant to give any dates to Orpheus, for many (including Aristotle) have believed him to be an entirely mythical character, the story of his life being deeply entwined with the mythology of ancient Greece. It is said, for instance, that he sailed with Jason and the Argonauts in their quest for the Golden Fleece, guarded by a dragon who never slept. Among Jason's crew of young adventurers were others who later became renowned as Greek heroes and demigods, such as Hercules, Nestor and Theseus.

The earliest records of Greek civilization are found in Crete, dated at around 3000 BCE, and known as the Minoan culture. It was the period 1600–1200 BCE, however, which saw the growth and decline of the Mycenaean culture in Greece, which included the Trojan War and the events immortalized far later in the legends related by Homer (*c.*800 BCE) and others. The events of the Mycenaean period are generally reckoned to have provided the historical reality behind some of the later Greek mythology.

1100 BCE onwards saw the beginnings of Greek expansion from the mainland into the Aegean islands and the coasts of Asia Minor. Dynasties came and went, but the colonization and trading activities continued. The first Olympic Games were held in 776 BCE, the four-year cycle (the Olympiad) in which the games were held later becoming a chronological unit and the basis for dating historical events in the Hellenic world. During the latter half of the eighth century BCE, the Greek alphabet was developed. Based upon earlier Phoenician models, it spread rapidly throughout the Hellenistic world, and it is from this point that the literary world of ancient Greece has its beginnings.

If Orpheus really lived, it would probably have been in Mycenaean times, during the period 1450–1150 BCE, and certainly before the time of Homer (*c.*800 BCE). This was an era when mystical realities were commonly described by means of allegorical myth and the story of Orpheus the Thracian poet – no doubt 'enhanced' by later additions – is not without its mystical aspects. Traditionally, he was renowned as a singer and player of the lyre. According to legend, so sweet and captivating was his voice that not only were the birds and animals enchanted by the sound of his music, but even the trees and rocks were softened by his playing, moving from place to place at his behest. During his adventures with the Argonauts, undertaken after a visit to Egypt, the acknowledged centre of the 'mysteries' in the ancient world, it was the music of Orpheus that saved his companions from many difficulties. In one well-known episode, the Argonauts had to pass close by the rocks on which the seductive Sirens dwelt. These alluring sea nymphs sang so enticingly that passing sailors were involuntarily attracted to them, their ships being wrecked upon the rocks. Seeing that their quest would be compromised before it had scarcely begun, Orpheus played and sang a music so much sweeter than that of the Sirens that his companions listened to him instead, and so passed by in safety.

On his return from this voyage, Orpheus marries the dryad (wood nymph) Eurydicē. But one day, Eurydicē treads on a serpent and, dying of its bite, she enters the realm of *Hadēs*, lord of the underworld. In the modern world, it is the story of Orpheus' descent into the underworld to rescue her that is most commonly recalled. Passing through a narrow passageway, Orpheus descends into the realm of *Hadēs* where, with the plaintive longing of his music, not only does he charm Charon (the ferryman across the river Styx), the dog Cerberus and the three Judges of the Dead, but also gains a suspension of torture for the damned, and is able to so soothe the heart of *Hadēs* that he wins permission to escort Eurydicē back into the realm of the living.

Hadēs makes just one provision: neither of them should not look back until Eurydicē is safely out of the realm of darkness and in the upper world of light. So she follows Orpheus up through the dark passageway, following the sound of his lyre. But Orpheus is so happy when he sees the light of the sun that he looks behind to share his delight with Eurydicē, and so loses her forever.

These legends of Orpheus echo many mystic themes. Many mystics have said that all of nature is sustained by the divine music of the Creative Word or *Logos*. Everything lives and moves at its command. Even the rocks and trees exist and change by virtue of this mystic Music reverberating within them. Further, the path to obtain the greatest treasure of all (symbolized as the 'Golden Fleece', guarded by the sleepless serpent of the mind) is beset with difficulties that are overcome by contact with this Music – and with the help of a guide who knows how to 'play' its sweet strains. The sweetest seductions and allurements of the world (the Sirens) are no match for the attraction of the divine Music. Similarly, the soul has often been likened to the bride of God or of her Saviour. In the story, the wife of Orpheus is bitten by the serpent of her lower nature and descends into the realm of the dead, from where only her divine Bridegroom can effect a rescue, leading her up through the inner passageway, guided by the sound of the divine Music.

Orpheus' mistake of looking over his shoulder is in keeping with the tradition of Greek tragedy, and the many other details of these stories that seem to have no apparent mystical interpretation are perhaps the embellishments of later storytellers, weaving their plot around an emotive theme that draws power from an (often unconsciously recognized) basis in reality.

Orphic writings, either credited to Orpheus himself or written in his tradition, are commonly of a mythological nature, and are preserved as fragments in the writings of others. In the *Orphic Rhapsodies,* the source of all things is portrayed as the One. From the One, a primeval 'mud' comes into being, evolving into 'Earth' and 'Water'. And from these first stirrings of the One is born *Kronos* (Time), sometimes represented as a winged serpent. From *Kronos,* by successive degrees, all the lesser gods and powers then emerge. In this progression of the One to form creation through the agency of Time, there is more than a hint of the mystical. Time is the essence of the diversity and multiplicity of the created realms, where change is perceived as the flow of time.

Orphic mythology, however, is complex, traversed by many conflicting lines of thought, and although some of the details make a satisfying match as allegories for mystic truth, such an interpretation is essentially speculative. There is no doubt, however, that the teachings ascribed to Orpheus in the Greek world included many fundamentals of the mystic path.

As a loose body of religious and spiritual doctrine, Orphism encompassed a belief in the immortality of the soul and its transmigration into human and lower forms where it is imprisoned as a punishment for former sins. The soul is judged after death, according to its deeds. If a person has lived a good life, the soul is rewarded by a stay in the meadows of the blessed, the Elysian fields (*i.e.* heaven). For a life of misdeeds, the soul is punished in some way or even sent to hell. After the period of reward or punishment is over, the soul is reincarnated. Orphic practice also included vegetarianism, abstinence from wine and sex, and a general interest in self-purification. This is witnessed by many comments from the ancient writers, including Plato,[104] as well as in poetry attributed (pseudo-epigraphically) to Orpheus.

Like the soul's eventual return to Him, the omnipresence and omnipotence of one God in His creation was also a fundamental Orphic doctrine, as in a work improbably attributed to Aristotle:

> Though He is One, He has many names, according to the many effects He Himself produces.... So it is rightly written in the Orphic books:
>
> *Zeus* is the first-born, *Zeus* is the last,
> the lord of all lightning:
> *Zeus* is the head, *Zeus* the centre:
> from *Zeus* comes all that is;
> *Zeus* is the foundation of the earth
> and the starry heavens;
> *Zeus* is a man,
> *Zeus* an immortal Virgin (*i.e.* Wisdom);
> *Zeus* is the Breath of all things,
> *Zeus* is the Spring of tireless fire;
> *Zeus* is the root of ocean,
> *Zeus* is the sun and moon;
> *Zeus* is King,
> *Zeus* is the Master of all,
> the Lord of the lightning.
> For He hid all men away,
> and has brought them again to the lovely Light,
> from the holiness of His heart, working great marvels.
>
> *Pseudo-Aristotle, On the Cosmos 7:401a–b, SCC pp.404–7*

Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans

The same mystic doctrines were taught by the first of the genuinely historical mystic philosophers of Greece – Pythagoras. In fact, so much did Pythagoras identify his teachings with those of Orpheus that he is said to have written verses in the name of Orpheus.[105] Though the details of Pythagoras' life are also hedged about with legend, there is no doubt that he once lived. Even so, the information provided by ancient writers differs, while the three extant biographies were all written in the early Christian era, 600 to 800 years after his death. Diogenēs Laertius, in the second or third centuries CE, writes of him in his *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers,* and the Neo-Platonists Porphyry (*c.*232–305 CE) and his pupil, Iamblichus (*d.c.*330 CE), each wrote a *Life of Pythagoras.* All three of them used earlier material, but even its authenticity is dubious. Nevertheless, there are certain basic details upon which all are more or less agreed.

Pythagoras was born around 580 BCE on Samos, a large undulating island in the Aegean Sea about a mile off the southwest coast of Asia Minor (now Turkey). His mother is generally agreed to have been a Greek and his father is variously described as a Phoenician, a Syrian or an Etruscan. At any rate, his father came from Asia Minor where there were many Greek trading posts, colonies and cities at the time.

Around the age of thirty, Pythagoras left Samos owing to the tyrannical rule of the autocratic Polycratēs. He must have been endowed with a questing spirit, for after a period of travel, he found his way to Egypt, where it is said that he was initiated into their mysteries, spending many years with their wise men. In 525 BCE, the Persians invaded Egypt, and Pythagoras was taken to Babylon as a prisoner where he spent ten years, coming into contact with the Zoroastrian magi. About 515 BCE, then in middle age, he returned to Samos for a brief period before moving to Croton in southern Italy, a region with such a strong Greek presence that it was known as 'Greater Greece'. And it was here, around 518 BCE, that Pythagoras established a centre that appears to have developed very rapidly, becoming the source of his long-lived fame.

No other person is mentioned more frequently by the ancient writers of the Grecian world than Pythagoras. Doctrines attributed to him were taught openly for 1200 years until the sixth century CE. Yet it is generally accepted among modern scholars, and was proverbial among the ancients, that not only did Pythagoras submit none of his teachings to writing, but that they were also secret, his disciples being forbidden to divulge them to others.[106] This would have been quite acceptable at the time for the Orphic and other mystery schools all followed a similar practice.

Pursuing a well-trodden pathway in the history of religion, in the fifth century BCE, some time after the departure of Pythagoras and his successors, a serious division took place among the Pythagoreans, both asserting that they were following the real teachings of their Master. As time passed, Pythagorean doctrine became increasingly diffused, and it is now impossible to determine

with accuracy the details of the path he taught. Indeed, Porphyry intimates in his biography that since the teachings of Pythagoras were a closely guarded secret, they could never be reconstructed with any certainty.[107] Iamblichus, however, asserts that the teachings of Pythagoras were the same universal truth revealed to all the sages such as Orpheus, Plato, Apollonius of Tyana (C1st CE) and Plotinus (*c.*205–270 CE). One of the more certain facts is that the geometric theorem from which the modern world is most familiar with the name of Pythagoras did not originate with him.

As with Orpheus, treatises were written and ascribed to Pythagoras, while teachings on a wide range of subjects received acceptance by being placed under the umbrella of his respected name. Pythagoras was credited with being a divine man, with giving mystic teachings and with performing many miracles, including more than a few closely resembling those of Jesus. In fact, one of the intentions of Porphyry and Iamblichus was to show that there was nothing unique about the mission, teachings and miracles of Jesus.

There is little doubt that Pythagoras, like Orpheus before him, taught the immortality of the soul, reincarnation into human and lower forms, vegetarianism and abstinence from alcohol,[108] together with the pursuance of a good and virtuous life. But he seems to have taught more by metaphor and symbol than through the mythological allegories of the preceding centuries. It is also commonly said that he used numerical and musical symbolism. He is further credited with being the originator of the terms 'philosopher' and 'philosophy', as well as coining the term *kosmos* (*lit.* order) for the created universe.

Pythagoras taught that at the heart of everything lies the ineffable One, the Monad, the Creator of the cosmos, sometimes called *Apollo* and sometimes *Zeus*, the father of the gods. Pythagoreans had many names for this source, including the Cause of Truth, Being and the Friend. He was also called the *Hysplex* or starting machine, the name of the instrument used to start Greek chariot races, here applied since it is this central power that set the cosmos in motion. The One was also linked with the idea of the *Nous* or Mind of God as the active creative principle in all things.

From the One, the dyad (*lit.* a pair) – the *kakos daemon* or evil spirit, the evil or negative principle in creation – came into being. This *daemon* is the source of all the pairs of opposites which constitute the known universe – male and female, light and darkness, good and evil, and the rest. As Hippolytus, the early-third-century Bishop of Rome, wrote:

> Pythagoras ... declared the originating principle of the universe to be the unbegotten Monad and the generated dyad.
>
> *Hippolytus, Refutation of All Heresies VI:18, RAH pp.216–17*

Through a play on the Greek words, the dyad (from the Greek, *dyas*) was also known as *dyē* or misery, alluding to the suffering and misery caused by the

activity of the evil spirit. Later Pythagorean doctrine goes on to enumerate a symbolic meaning of 'three' as representing the plurality and multiplicity caused by the activity of the dyad, similarly finding a mystic meaning for all the numbers up to ten. But how much of this number symbolism was originated by Pythagoras and how much by his later self-styled followers is unknown. Number symbolism, however, as well as many other aspects of later Pythagoreanism, is commonly found in many of the more convoluted gnostic systems of thought.

The dyad would seem to be the same as the negative or evil power of which the gnostics wrote. Later Pythagoreans such as Empedoclēs (*c.*490–430 BCE) spoke of the ever present "conflict" between "Strife", "Discord" or "Negativity" and "Amity", "Friendship" or "Love" – between the negative power and the Divine. "Discord" or "Negativity," he said, is the principle by which the creation and all souls are separated from God. It is also the architect of this world. Hippolytus further indicates that Empedoclēs clearly spoke of these two powers as deities or real forces in creation, not as merely intellectual abstractions.[109]

Hippolytus asserts that this view of creation was originally Pythagorean. While "Discord" separates, "Friendship" or "Love" draws souls out of this world and back to the unity of God.[110] Hippolytus then goes on to quote Empedoclēs' description of the soul's transmigration, passing from body to body as an exile, "for thrice ten thousand years banished from bliss"[111] – that is, separated from God for an unimaginably long period of time.

One of the primary purposes of Hippolytus in providing such descriptions is to point out the similarities between the doctrines of Pythagoras and Plato on the one hand, and those of the gnostics on the other. A recurrent theme throughout his *Refutation of All Heresies* is that the gnostics are plagiarists, and he hopes to discredit them thereby:

> The heresy of Valentinus is certainly, then, connected with the Pythagorean and Platonic theory. For Plato, in the *Timaeus*, altogether derives his impressions from Pythagoras, and therefore Timaeus himself is his Pythagorean stranger....
>
> (Pythagoras and Plato) derived these tenets originally from the Egyptians, and introduced their novel opinions among the Greeks. But (Valentinus took his opinions) from these, because, although he has suppressed the truth regarding his obligation to (the Greek philosophers), and in this way has endeavoured to construct a doctrine (as it were) peculiarly his own. Yet, in point of fact, he has altered the doctrines of those (thinkers) in names and numbers only (a reference to the gnostic development of Pythagorean number symbolism), and has adopted a peculiar terminology (of his own). Valentinus has formed his definitions by measures, in order that he may establish a Hellenic heresy, diversified no doubt, but unstable, and not connected with Christ.
>
> *Hippolytus, Refutation of All Heresies VI:16; cf. RAH pp.214–16*

Hippolytus thinks that he is deriding the gnostic Valentinus, as well as Colarbasus,[112] Marcus,[113] Elchasai[114] and others, when he states that their doctrines are not those of Jesus, but of Pythagoras. But he is missing the point, and actually succeeds in demonstrating that true mystics are not interested in spinning out intellectual systems of their own, but in transmitting the same eternal truths. They are only attempting to describe the same reality as those before them. If two people describe the same thing in a similar manner, they can hardly be accused of plagiarism.

The existence of a spiritual dimension to creation is also attributed by Hippolytus to Pythagoras, with the *Logos* as the link between man and the "spiritual" realms:

> There are ... according to Pythagoras, two worlds: one spiritual, which has the Monad for an originating principle; and the other sensible....
>
> Wherefore, the universe being divided ... into the spiritual and sensible worlds, we are also endowed with the *Logos* which comes from the spiritual (world), in order that by this *Logos,* we may behold the reality of things that are perceived by the spirit, and are incorporeal and divine.
>
> But we have, he says (as human beings), five senses – smelling, seeing, hearing, taste and touch. Now, by these we arrive at a knowledge of (those) things that are discerned by sense....
>
> The sensible (he says) is divided from the spiritual world.... Nothing ... of the spiritual can be known to us from (physical) sense. For, he says, neither eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor any whatsoever of the other senses known that (which is perceived by the soul).
>
> *Hippolytus, Refutation of All Heresies VI:19; cf. RAH p.218*

Also commonly ascribed to Pythagoras is a belief in the power of music. Here, Pythagoras was on traditional ground, for Hellenic mythology contained many references to musicians who could charm the gods of the nether world, a supernatural feat probably derived from the legends of Orpheus. The real 'supernatural' music of which mystics speak is the divine Music of the *Logos,* and there are many allusions that appear to stem from an understanding of this eternal principle in creation.

Pythagoras, for instance, was said to have effected miraculous cures in his disciples through the power of his music, not only healing bodily ills, but also quieting the human passions and even curing madness.[115] Many of the Greeks also spoke of the Cosmic Music, sometimes equating it with the Music of the Spheres, the music made by the regular movements of the stars and planets as they moved in their respective crystalline spheres around the earth.[116] But there are more than intimations that the Cosmic Music and the Music of the Spheres known to the mystics was understood to be of an altogether unearthly character.[117]

Like all mystics, Pythagoras had his teachers, but who they were is not known with any certainty. Clement of Alexandria says that in Egypt Pythagoras was "a disciple of Sonchis the Egyptian arch prophet",[118] and Plutarch similarly speaks of a certain Oenuphis of On.[119] The sage Zaratus is mentioned by Porphyry[120] as Pythagoras' particular mentor in Persia, but the name may only be a variant of Zarathushtra, implying that Pythagoras became familiar with the teachings of the ancient Persian mystic. In Greece, Pythagoras seems to have come into contact with three of the most well known early-sixth-century philosophers of the time: Thalēs (*c.*624–546 BCE) and Anaximander (611–547 BCE), both of Miletus, and Pherecydēs of Syros.

Thalēs is said by Diogenēs Laertius (*c.*412–323 BCE) to have taught the "immortality of the soul", and that "death is no different from life". Diogenēs also reports that on being asked, "What is difficult?" Thalēs replied, "To know oneself," and Diogenēs credits him with originating the Greek motto, "Know thyself,"[121] the injunction of the Greek Oracle at Delphi, a saying attributed to a number of Greek philosophers. Anaximander believed that the universe has a First Principle, which is infinite.[122] Even so, both seem to have been more thinkers and natural scientists in the early Greek mould than mystics. The association of Pythagoras with Pherecydēs, however, is said to have been lasting,[123] and his name is commonly linked with that of Pythagoras as teaching the same doctrines, but whether he was the spiritual Master of Pythagoras is unknown. Certainly, Plotinus later equated the teachings of Pythagoras and Pherecydēs when he wrote of the "ancient philosophers that ranged themselves most closely to the school of Pythagoras and of his later followers, and to that of Pherecydēs".[124]

Pythagoras must have died towards the end of the sixth century or early in the fifth. His centre in Croton was established around 518 BCE and one of his modern biographers, Peter Gorman, suggests on good evidence that he died some time after 480 BCE at around one hundred years of age.[125] Others maintain that he died earlier. During his lifetime, Pythagoras was the undisputed head of his community, consisting of a resident population as well as many others who came regularly from the surrounding area and probably from further afield as well. Unlike the majority of the Greeks in southern Italy, Pythagoras was noted for having associated with the local, 'common' folk, a further hallmark of a true mystic.

After his departure, Aristaeus of Croton took responsibility as the head of the community, but since he was already an old man at that time, Mnemarchus, the son of Pythagoras, assumed the leadership. After him came Boulagoras, and then Gartydas of Croton. Although the details of the various histories differ, it does seem certain that there was local opposition to the Pythagoreans, even during the time of Pythagoras. It was not until some years after his death, however, during the mid-fifth century, when the Pythagoreans were still numerous in the area and had become involved in local politics, that the local Italian

community reacted strongly against the influence of the Pythagoreans. Their centre at Croton was destroyed and a number of Pythagoreans killed. Owing to the continuing persecution, many migrated to Greece and other places, and the inevitable dilution of Pythagoras' original teachings was hastened. Owing to diminishing numbers, the new leader at that time, Aresas of Leucania, admitted anyone who wished to join the society, regardless of their suitability, and a further decline must have resulted.

It was also during the fifth century that the first major schism developed, the two parties being called the *Mathematici* and the *Acusmatici*. It was probably the *Mathematici*, under the influence of such men as Hippasus and Philolaus, who developed the mathematical, scientific and musical aspects of later Pythagoreanism. The more dogmatic *Acusmatici*, on the other hand, who adhered to rigid aphorisms and verbal formulations of belief, refused to accept the *Mathematici* as real Pythagoreans.

The demise of the centre at Croton had the result of spreading Pythagorean teachings further into the Greek and later into the Roman worlds, some Pythagoreans adopting the wandering life and the black cloak by which they became known for the next millennium and more. The message of Pythagoras, though often little understood, thus became the ideal and exemplar for many esoteric movements, including the Judaic Essenes, the Therapeutae of Egypt, and St Antony (*c.*251–356), the Egyptian hermit commonly regarded as the founder of Christian monasticism. In his *Miscellanies,* Clement of Alexandria refers continually to Pythagoras and to a great many wise men who he says were Pythagoreans, including the Alexandrian Jew, Philo Judaeus.[126] Origen similarly refers frequently to Pythagoras, in *Against Celsus,* as the primary source of esoteric teachings in the Greek and Roman worlds, as did Hippolytus.

Hippolytus also comments that after the death of Pythagoras, Zamolxis, a slave whom Pythagoras had freed, took his Master's teachings to the Celtic Druids,[127] teaching them the doctrine of reincarnation and other tenets of the mystic path. Pythagoras thus became a universal lodestone to which those of a mystic bent of mind were automatically attracted and with whom esoteric teachings were automatically associated.

Although few details are reliably recorded of Pythagoras' teachings, a considerable wealth of literature has been preserved from later Pythagoreans and others who have acknowledged the high calibre of his doctrine. These philosophers and mystics, together with another sixth- and fifth-century philosopher, Heraclitus (*c.*535–475 BCE), an Ionian from the city of Ephesus, provide the greatest wealth of extant Greek mystical tradition.

Born into an ancient and noble family, Heraclitus inherited a position of public office, which he resigned in favour of his younger brother. Contemporary with Pythagoras for some time, the few succinct and often epigrammatic sayings that have survived as citations among the writings of others indicate that Heraclitus, too, was of a mystic disposition. It seems that only one book by

Heraclitus *(On Nature)* was known to antiquity, which – according to Clement of Alexandria – was very similar to *Theology* by Pherecydēs of Syros,[128] one of the teachers of Pythagoras. Its content, however, was unanimously declared enigmatic. It is certainly true that the comparatively few out-of-context fragments that have been preserved possess a pithy profundity with a love of wordplay that is readily identifiable.

To the ancients, Heraclitus became known as "the Obscure", "the Dark" and "the Riddling".[129] Clement of Alexandria, who must have possessed a well-thumbed copy of Heraclitus' book, for he often quotes him appreciatively, comments that he wrote in a "veiled"[130] manner, that "he loved to conceal his metaphysics in the language of the mysteries,"[131] and also that he "took a very great deal from Orpheus".[132]

Among the Pythagorean and other mystics and philosophers in the Greek mould known to history are Philolaus, Empedoclēs, Sextus the Pythagorean, Plotinus, Iamblichus, Hieroclēs, and the most well known of them all, Socratēs and Plato. Cited in their writings are also some excerpts attributed to Pythagoras, but although their content is certainly worthy of a mystic, it is difficult to determine if they were really written by him. In all likelihood, they were composed by others in the name of the great sage.

Philolaus (C5th BCE) and Empedoclēs (*c*.490–430 BCE) were Pythagoreans who lived in the two or three generations immediately following Pythagoras.[133] Like Heraclitus, Empedoclēs also came from an influential family. He is known to have written two works, one, an imaginative poem in which he presents biological ideas akin to those of natural selection *(On Nature)*, and the other on more mystical matters *(On Purifications)*. They are only extant, however, as fragments quoted in the works of others, the latter having the greater interest from a mystical viewpoint.

Socratēs and Plato

Though the historical accounts are conflicting, it seems that Empedoclēs and the great Athenian, Socratēs (*c*.470–399 BCE) were contemporaries for some time. Socratēs is known primarily through the writings of his disciples Plato (*c*.427–347 BCE) and the Greek general and historian, Xenophon (431–355 BCE), though Plato was far more prolific than Xenophon. Socratēs himself committed nothing to writing, and whatever is known of his teachings is largely through the medium of Plato's dialogues. But how true they are to Socratēs and how much they are the expression of Plato's thought is difficult to determine. It is evident, for instance, that as time passed and Plato's thought developed, his use of Socratēs as a medium for conveying his own ideas became increasingly inappropriate and anachronistic. For while Plato ventures into the world of political and social concerns, it seems from Plato's account that Socratēs himself was wholly committed to the life of a philosopher in the ancient, mystic meaning of the term. Plato, it may be observed, cannot have had more than a few years

association with Socratēs for he was only in his late twenties when Socratēs was tried and put to death. The grounds for his execution were the introduction of new divinities and corrupting the youth of Athens, although the fact that he was tried at all was the result of an unfortunate sequence of political events.

According to Plato, Socratēs' method was to present himself as an ignorant man in search of true understanding. Meeting with various 'authorities' in their respective fields, he is portrayed by Plato in a number of dialogues as undermining the authenticity of the knowledge held by these 'experts' by asking searching questions under the guise of seeking deeper understanding. But by the time Socratēs has completed his gentle but persistent interrogation, the superficial nature of such 'knowledge' has usually been exposed. The message is that real knowledge is the knowledge of one's own true self, mystic knowledge of the soul. Hence the admonition of the Oracle at Delphi, quoted by Plato and others, "Know thyself."[134]

Many Western intellectuals and scholars, perhaps feeling prejudiced against mysticism or at least failing to really understand it or to take it seriously, have interpreted Socratēs and Plato as akin to Western philosophers. But this is not the way the ancients saw them. The Neo-Platonists often spoke of the "divine Plato", for example, describing him as a Pythagorean, an epithet implying that he was a proponent of a mystical or spiritual viewpoint, and from the way in which they quoted him it is clear that they considered him to be an individual of a deeply mystic character. In one of his letters, Plato describes Socratēs as "an older friend of mine, whom I would not hesitate to call the wisest and most righteous man of that time".[135]

While the metaphysical and mystical teachings of Socratēs are given an intellectual exposition in Plato's dialogues, there are more than hints of an underlying, personal mystic experience. This is no more evident than in *Phaedo*. On the day appointed for his execution, Socratēs meets with his friends, and in the discourse that follows he tells them that the true philosopher "is always engaged in the pursuit of dying and death".[136] He is referring to the process of dying while living, of undergoing the process of death while still living in the body; for, ruling out suicide, he describes the nature of the death sought by a philosopher. It is, he says, the "separation of the soul from the body",[137] when the soul is released from the body, and can no longer be misled by the untrustworthy senses in the search for truth. "Philosophers, above all other men," he tells his friends, "may be observed to free the soul from association with the body,"[138] for then alone can the immortal soul become pure and apprehend reality.

Therefore, he continues, "True philosophers practise dying, and death is less terrible to them than to any other men."[139] It is among such true philosophers, he says, that "during my whole life, I have been striving, according to my ability, to find a place".[140] The means of accomplishing the severance of the soul from the body is concentration: "teaching the soul the habit of collecting and gathering herself into herself from all parts of the body".[141] And he indicates that this

practice requires initiation and instruction – a staff here being a part of the outward trappings of a Greek holy man or philosopher:

> The founders of the mysteries would appear to have had a hidden meaning, and were not talking nonsense, when they intimated long ago that he who passes uninitiated and unsanctified into the next world will wallow in the mire, but he who arrives there initiated and purified will dwell with the gods. For, as they say in the mysteries, "The staff-bearers are many, but the mystics are few."
>
> *Plato, Phaedo 69c–d; cf. DP1 p.420, PDS p.123, PEA pp.240–41*

It is worth recalling that little attention was given to the Greek philosophers and mystics after the Christian Emperor Justinian, jealous of his reputation for strict orthodoxy, had decreed that Greek philosophy should no longer be taught, closing Plato's Academy at Athens in 529 CE. The Dark Ages of ignorance lasted for many centuries until the rediscovery and revival of the Greek classics, first among the Muslims, particularly the Sufis, and then in Europe during the Renaissance. But by this time, the mystic meaning of many terms and expressions had been lost, and the new generations of Christian thinkers interpreted Plato and others in a specifically intellectual light, according to their own bent of mind.

It is true that a large portion of Plato's works is concerned with social and allied issues, but it must be remembered that Plato founded the Academy with the intention of teaching all known branches of learning, within the context of philosophy. For he was convinced that the corruption of society and government would only cease when rulers and all those holding power, great or small, were trained in philosophy in the true spiritual and mystic sense of the term. Plato's writings, therefore, relate to his ideals and activities in his chosen profession as a teacher, his thoughts being permeated by his natural bent as a true philosopher.

As a teacher, Plato was clearly successful, and possibly more of his writings have been preserved than those of any other writer of antiquity. Moreover, although his school evolved and changed, it continued in existence for nearly 1000 years, among his first pupils being such notable thinkers as Aristotle (384–322 BCE), tutor to Alexander the Great. Sometimes called the father of modern science, Aristotle founded his own Academy, which later became the prototype of Western universities, especially in their earliest days before the acquisition of human knowledge became divorced from religion and a sense of ethics.

A spiritual perspective is therefore evident throughout Plato's writings, while some of his dialogues are expressly mystical. All the same, Plato himself points out that he had never written nor would he ever write a treatise expressing a full understanding of genuine wisdom or philosophy – that is, of the mystic path. In a rare extant letter, he wrote:

> No treatise by me concerning it (philosophy, wisdom) exists or ever will exist. It is not something that can be put into words like other branches of learning.... If I thought that any adequate spoken or written account could be given to the world at large, what more glorious life work could I have undertaken than to put into writing what would be of great benefit to mankind, and to bring the nature of Reality to light for all to see? But I do not think that the attempt to put these matters into words would be to men's advantage, except to those few who can find out the truth for themselves with a little guidance; the rest would be either filled with an unjustifiable and quite improper contempt for their fellows or with a lofty and vain expectation, based on the belief that they were in possession of some mighty secret.
>
> *Plato, Letters VII:341, PPL p.136*

Later, he adds that no "serious" writer on any subject ever expresses the whole of his thought, nor even the deepest essence of it:

> Any serious student of serious realities will shrink from making truth the helpless object of men's ill will by committing it to writing. In a word, the conclusion to be drawn is this: when one sees a written composition, whether it be on law by a legislator or on any other subject, one can be sure, if the writer is a serious man, that his book does not represent his most serious thoughts; they remain stored up in the noblest region of his personality (mind). If he is really serious in what he has set down in writing, "then surely", not the gods but men, "have robbed him of his wits".[142]
>
> *Plato, Letters VII:344, PPL pp.140–41*

Plotinus and the Neo-Platonists

During the period immediately preceding the Christian era, interest in Greek mystical philosophy fell into a decline lasting until the advent of the so-called Neo-Platonists in the latter half of the second century CE. Among these Neo-Platonists, the figure most well known to posterity is that of Plotinus. Although a biography of Plotinus (*c.*205–270 CE) is extant, written by Porphyry (*c.*232–305 CE), his disciple and associate for eight years, little is actually known of his life. Porphyry even comments that Plotinus

> seemed ashamed of being in the body. So deeply rooted was this feeling that he could never be induced to tell of his ancestry, his parentage or his birthplace.
>
> *Porphyry, Life of Plotinus 1, PEP p.cii*

It may be presumed, however, that like many mystics before and since, Plotinus saw no reason to obscure his message by the circumstances of his physical existence. As Porphyry also writes:

> He never disclosed the month or day (of his birth). This was because he did not desire any birthday sacrifice or feast.... He showed, too, an unconquerable reluctance to sit to a painter or a sculptor, and when Amelius (Gentilanus from Etruria, Plotinus' senior pupil) persisted in urging him to allow of a portrait being made, he asked him, "Is it not enough to carry about this image (the body) in which nature has enclosed us? Do you really think I must also consent to leave, as a desirable spectacle to posterity, an image of the image?"
>
> *Porphyry, Life of Plotinus 2, 1, PEP pp.cii–ciii*

Plotinus seems to have been a native of Upper Egypt, born to parents of some means, and to have received a good education. During his twenties, he was in Alexandria seeking spiritual understanding among the many schools and teachers of that ancient capital of the intellectual Hellenistic world. He failed, however, to find what he was seeking until a friend took him to a discourse given by Ammonius Saccas, known as the 'God-taught'. Porphyry relates that it took only a little time for the young Plotinus to exclaim to his friend, "This is the man I was looking for."[143] Porphyry continues:

> From that day, he followed Ammonius continuously, and under his guidance made such progress in philosophy that he became eager to investigate the Persian methods and the system adopted amongst the Indians.
>
> It happened that the Emperor Gordian was at that time preparing his campaign against Persia; Plotinus joined the army and went on the expedition. He was then thirty-eight, for he had passed eleven entire years under Ammonius. When Gordian was killed (assassinated) in Mesopotamia, it was only with great difficulty that Plotinus came off safe to Antioch.
>
> *Porphyry, Life of Plotinus 3, PEP p.civ*

Plotinus had joined Gordian's Persian expedition in 243 but, after some military success, the campaign came to an abrupt end in 244, when Gordian was murdered by his troops, and his military commander, Philip the Arabian, was proclaimed emperor. Only with difficulty did Plotinus escape, finding his way to Antioch. From Antioch, Plotinus travelled on to Rome, arriving there in 245 CE, at the age of forty. There he settled, teaching mystical philosophy for a period of twenty-five years. Attendance at his discourses, says Porphyry was free and "open to every comer",[144] and among his disciples were physicians, senators, writers, a former rhetorician who had turned banker, and many other distinguished men and women.

Plotinus was highly regarded in the Roman community. Friends and others would come to him with their problems, often trivial, and his kindly manner and wise counsel were greatly valued. He acted as arbiter in disputes without ever making an enemy. Friends who were approaching death would commonly

appoint Plotinus as legal guardian of their children, a duty which he undertook to the best of his ability, caring meticulously for their education and property. His house, says Porphyry, was always full of children. Yet with all these concerns, Plotinus never lost his focus on the Supreme.[145]

He was also held in considerable esteem by the Emperor Galenius and his wife, Salonina, which lead Plotinus to request that he be given a grant for the rebuilding of the largely ruined city of Campania, to be named Platonopolis, whose government would be modelled on Plato's *Republic*. The details surrounding the reasons for the project are unknown, but the undertaking was opposed by the emperor's advisers and never came to fruition.[146]

Porphyry also describes how Plotinus arrived unexpectedly one day at his house, where, in a period of depression, he had secluded himself, and was contemplating suicide. Porphyry does not reveal the reasons for his upset state of mind, but Plotinus counselled him that his intentions were not rational, and advised him to leave Rome for a change of scenery. Porphyry chose Sicily in order that he might visit Probus, a scholar of some repute who lived there. This must have been towards the end of Plotinus' life, because before Porphyry could return, Plotinus had died.[147]

Interestingly, Plotinus – who must have come into contact with gnostic teachings during his early life in Egypt – is also opposed to the teachings of at least some of the gnostic schools, especially their dualism, jargon and fanciful cosmogonies. Porphyry mentions five gnostic texts, all of which were unknown until at least two of them, *Allogenēs* and *Zostrianos*, were found among the texts of the Nag Hammadi library.[148]

Plotinus led a very simple life. He was vegetarian and his physical needs were few. In his latter years, when Porphyry knew him,

> (he) was often distressed by an intestinal complaint … (but) refused such medicaments as contain any substance taken from wild beasts or reptiles: all the more, he remarked, because he could not approve of eating the flesh of animals reared for the table.
>
> *Porphyry, Life of Plotinus 2, PEP p.cii*

Much of his time was devoted to meditation, and Porphyry says that "his end and aim was intimate union with God who is above all things," adding that during the time he knew him, his Master "attained this end four times".[149] The school in Rome was centred entirely on Plotinus, and after his health began to fail, the centre gradually came to an end. Almost blind, and suffering from a variety of disorders, Plotinus retired to the estate of a friend and disciple in Campania, where he died in 270 CE. His last words to his friend were reported to have been, "Now I shall endeavour to make that which is divine in me rise up to that which is divine in the universe."[150]

Like Pythagoras before him, Ammonius Saccas enjoined secrecy on his disciples concerning his teachings, and for the first ten years of his life in Rome, Plotinus followed his Master's example, committing nothing to writing. Subsequently, however, he did begin to write, and after 263 CE, when Porphyry became his disciple, urging him to write more, Plotinus' literary output increased, the majority of his work being composed during the six years that Porphyry was with him. After the death of his Master, Porphyry collected together and arranged Plotinus' various treatises into his only extant work, the *Enneads*.

From the schools of Ammonius Saccas and Plotinus there emerged what has been termed Neo-Platonism, though many have pointed out that it would have been better named Neo-Pythagoreanism. Even the intellectual Platonist, Longinus (*c.*213–272), a prominent Athenian whom Plotinus described as "a man of letters, but in no sense a philosopher",[151] wrote:

> Plotinus, it would seem, set the principles of Pythagoras and of Plato in a clearer light that anyone before him.
>
> *Longinus, in Porphyry, Life of Plotinus 20, PEP p.cxix*

Longinus must have been referring, however, to the mystical aspects of Plato's work, for the writings of Plotinus and the other Neo-Platonists are primarily mystical, little mixed with the ethical and social considerations of Plato. The teaching of Plotinus, therefore, was not considered new. Indeed, through Ammonius and Plotinus, the ancient teachings of the Greek mystics flourished once again for two or three centuries until the rising tide of orthodox Christianity all but swept them away. The advent of the Neo-Platonists was a late and final flowering of the mysticism that had come into being long before with Pythagoras and Orpheus.

Of the other Pythagoreans known from their writings and citations, little is known of Sextus except that the *Sentences of Sextus* were popular in early Christian times, while Hieroclēs – who wrote an inspiring commentary on the *Golden Verses of Pythagoras* (most unlikely to have been composed by Pythagoras himself) – is understood to have been an Alexandrian of the fifth century CE, and is sometimes described as a Neo-Platonist.

Hermetic Literature

One class of writings lying within the province of Greek mystical philosophy remains for consideration – the Hermetic literature, a body of Greek and Latin texts ascribed to Hermēs Trismegistus and his disciples, probably written during the second and third centuries CE. These writings are of importance partially because of their influence upon Renaissance mystics and philosophers such as Ramón Lull (*c.*1235–1315) and Giordano Bruno (1548–1600). Regarding Hermēs as an Egyptian Moses, they accorded the Hermetic literature the same

kind of reverence usually reserved for the Bible. To such Renaissance thinkers, these writings provided fresh avenues of thought and understanding, previously held in dull suspension by the cloying grip of medieval Christian theology. Jewish Kabbalism was similarly stimulated by it. But the Hermetic texts are also of interest for their own sake, since they relate to no previous body of belief, nor do they recognize any sacred writings in the way that the New Testament, for example, relates to the Jewish scriptures. They do contain, however, many perennial elements of universal mystic teaching, couched largely in the language of the Greek mystic philosophers, tinged with the gnostic expression of the period.

In the Greek world of those times, Hermēs was commonly identified with *Thoth,* the Egyptian god depicted with an ibis head. To Hermēs was added 'Trismegistus' (*lit.* thrice-greatest), one of *Thoth*'s local epithets. Scribe to the gods, *Thoth* was the divine patron of literature and learning, credited with the invention of both writing and the calendar, with the possession of magical powers, and regarded as the repository of all wisdom. And just as Jewish writings were ascribed to Solomon long after his departure, so too does it seem that these texts, many of them short in length, were ascribed to Hermēs Trismegistus and his disciples. But it is most improbable that they should really have originated in ancient Egypt, especially since they contain little, if anything, that relates specifically to earlier Egyptian religion or mystical expression. Perhaps the greatest Egyptian influence in these texts is the spiritual fervour and intensity, and the longing for union with the Divine, which pervades some of them, a feature often lacking from the more rational and controlled manner of pure Greek expression.

Not all the texts are of the same calibre, and a number of writers at different times and places were evidently involved. They are also of two distinct types: the specifically mystical and those concerned with astrology, magic, alchemy and similar topics. Hermetic texts generally take the form of dialogues between the Master Hermēs and his disciples, the main contributors being figures from the ancient Graeco-Egyptian world – Tat, *Isis, Horus,* King Ammon, Agathodaimon (Chnoum), and Imnhotep, equated by the Greeks with their renowned physician, Asclepius. The tradition of Master and disciple was thus taken for granted, as it always has been in mystic schools.

The basis of the Hermetic mystic teaching is familiar. There is one God who is the creator of all else in creation through His *Logos* or, more commonly, His *Nous* (Mind). The soul acquires salvation and God is known by direct revelation or *gnosis* through contact with this *Nous,* and through relinquishing all love of the physical body and the senses. In a number of these treatises, the *Nous* is also regarded as the source of inspiration, much as the Holy Spirit is depicted in Christian writings.

Nobody knows who started this genre or even from which school these Hermetic texts originated, but they probably stemmed from the Greek-speaking Egyptian milieu, as did many gnostic and Neo-Platonic texts. Ammonius Saccas and Plotinus were both Greek-speaking Egyptians, for instance, as were many of

the gnostics, and there were certainly many in Egypt who had studied Greek mystical philosophy. Any of these God-intoxicated seekers could have hit upon the simple idea of a dialogue between Hermēs and his disciples and have thus started a new genre, for the dialogue itself was already well established as a literary form.

The first certain references to Hermetic texts are not found until the early centuries of the Christian era, and scholars are generally agreed that the mystical texts stem from this period, though some of the astrological texts and those concerning the power of gemstones and plants probably date back to the early second century BCE. From the evidence of citations among the early Christian fathers and other writers, some Hermetic literature of the mystical type was clearly in existence by 207–213 CE, and the earliest texts were probably written during the second half of the first century, perhaps earlier.

Anthologies of mystical Hermetic writings were collected and circulated from the earliest times, but only one of these survives today. Compiled during the eleventh century – at which time its Byzantine editor also revised its language and its style – it became known as the 'Hermetic Corpus' or *Corpus Hermeticum*. It is likely that most of the mystical texts contained in it, as well as many others now lost, were composed between 100 and 300 CE.

That mystical Hermetic doctrines were considered to be more or less the same as those of Pythagoras and the mystical elements of Plato is borne out by the comments of early writers. The late-third-century Christian, Arnobius, writing against the Greek and Roman beliefs he had once espoused, complains that the followers of the philosophic schools held Christianity in little regard, identifying especially, in this respect, adherents of esoteric tradition:

> You, you I single out, who belong to the school of Hermēs, or of Plato and Pythagoras, and the rest of you who are of one mind and walk in union in the same paths of doctrine.
>
> *Arnobius, Against the Pagans II:13, in TGH3 p.230*

And Cyril of Alexandria, patriarch from 412 to 444 CE, after claiming that Pythagoras and Plato had obtained their wisdom in Egypt from what they had heard of Moses there, continues by linking the Hermetic doctrines to those of Moses:

> And I think the Egyptian Hermēs also should be considered worthy of mention and recollection – he who, they say, bears the title of Thrice-greatest because of the honour paid him by his contemporaries, and, as some think, in comparison with Hermēs, the fabled son of *Zeus* and *Maia*.
>
> This Hermēs of Egypt, then, although an initiator into mysteries ... is (nevertheless) found to have grasped the doctrine of Moses, if not with entire correctness and beyond all cavil, yet still in part.
>
> *Cyril of Alexandria, Against Julianus I:30, in TGH3 p.251*

Cyril thus unwittingly indicates the universal basis of all mystic teachings. Mystics might say, with gentle irony, that it was Cyril himself who had "grasped the doctrines of Moses", as well as those of Hermēs and Jesus, "in part". Similarly, the Neo-Platonist Iamblichus associates the teachings attributed to Hermēs with those of Pythagoras, Plato and the ancient Greek philosophers:

> Hermēs, the god who is our guide in (spiritual) discourses, was rightly held of old to be the heritage of all holy men. And seeing that it is he who is overseer of the true science of the gods, he has always been the same (guide) to all (such discourses). Therefore, it was to him that our ancestors attributed all the discoveries of their wisdom, attaching the name of Hermēs to all the writings which had to do with such subjects. And if we also enjoy that share of this god which has fallen to our lot, according to our ability, you would do well in submitting certain questions on theology to us holy men, as your friends, for their solution.
>
> And as I may fairly suppose that the letter sent to my disciple Anebo was written to myself, I will send you the true answers to the questions you have asked. For it would not be proper that Pythagoras and Plato, and Democritus and Eudoxus, and many others of the ancient Greeks should have obtained fitting instructions from the recorders of the sacred science of their times, and that you, our contemporary, who is of a like mind with these ancients, should lack guidance from the now living bearers of the title 'universal teachers'.
>
> *Iamblichus, On the Mysteries; cf. in TGH3 pp.286–87*

Iamblichus seems to take Hermēs as a genuine ancient and historical character, for elsewhere he indicates his belief that these writings were translated from the Egyptian. He accounts for their Greek language and expression, countering common disbelief in their ancient origin, by saying that they were translated by Greek philosophers:

> For the books in circulation bearing the name of Hermēs contain Hermetic doctrines, although they often use the language of the philosophers, seeing that they were translated from the Egyptian by men well skilled in philosophy.
>
> *Iamblichus, On the Mysteries, in TGH3 p.292*

1.10 ISLAM

The Prophet Muḥammad (*c.*570–632 CE) founded Islam in 622. While it may be argued that many religions started after the demise of their 'founders' – that Jesus did not found Christianity, nor Moses Judaism, nor the Buddha Buddhism, nor Guru Nānak Sikhism – this is not so in the case of Islam. Muḥammad did

found the religion of Islam; in fact Islam is founded on what Muḥammad said, did, and commanded his followers to do. The early history of Islam, therefore, begins with the history of the Prophet Muḥammad.

The life of Muḥammad is known through the work of four main historians: Isḥāq (*d.*767), Ibn Sa'd (*d.*845), Ṭabārī (*d.*923), and al-Waqīdī (*d.*820). These four also included earlier documents in their work and traced oral traditions back to their sources. The earliest text concerning the life of the Prophet dates back to approximately 120 years after his death.

The major direct sources of information concerning the personality and teachings of Muḥammad are the *Qur'ān* (Koran) and the *Ḥadīth*. The *Qur'ān* is, in Muslim belief, the uncreated word of God revealed to the Prophet Muḥammad through the angel Gabriel *(Jabra'īl)*. The *Ḥadīth* consists of traditional stories and sayings of the Prophet Muḥammad collected and organized after his death by Muslim scholars, for teaching and transmission purposes. To begin with, the *ḥadīth* were transmitted orally, each *ḥadīth* being preceded by a long list of names going back to the original teller. This is known in Islamic terms as *isnād*, and constitutes the authentication of the *Ḥadīth*.

Although the *Ḥadīth* expands on some of what is said in the *Qur'ān*, mostly it sets a standard of conduct for Muslims to follow. This includes such small details as how to perform ritual ablutions and prayers; how a mosque should be entered with the right foot and not the left; how the fingers should be licked after eating; and how sneezing is good, but yawning comes from the devil.

The Islamic Way of Life

Islam is divided into two main sects – the *Sunnī* and the *Shī'ah*. For the *Sunnī*, the most significant collections of *ḥadīth* are those compiled by al-Bukhārī (*d.*870), Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj (*d.*875), Abū Dā'ūd (*d.*888), Ibn Mājah (824–887) and al-Tirmidhī (*d.*892). Of these, al-Bukhārī's is regarded as the most reliable. He is said to have spent sixteen years collecting oral transmissions of *ḥadīth* from 1000 masters, hearing 600,000 *ḥadīths*, committing 100,000 to memory. The final result was a collection of only 2,762 authentic *ḥadīths*. The *Shī'ah* have different collections, to which have been added the sayings of their *Imāms* (religious leaders). In the development of Muslim law *(Sunnah)*, the *Ḥadīth* has constituted a major source, complementing the *Qur'ān* in the understanding, interpretation and application of Muslim belief and practice.

The *Ḥadīth* is divided into several categories, the two main ones being: *Ḥadīth Qudsī* (holy or divine tradition) and *Ḥadīth Nabawī* (prophetic or noble tradition), also called *Sharīf*. *Ḥadīth Qudsī* is the collection of sayings that were revealed to the Prophet directly by *Allāh*. This is different from the *Qur'ān* in that the *Qur'ān* is believed to have been dictated verbatim by *Allāh*, while only the meaning of *Ḥadīth Qudsī* was revealed to the Prophet, who then used his own words to convey the meaning. *Ḥadīth Nabawī* is a collection of sayings, acts or approbations related to the Prophet. This is what is usually known as

Ḥadīth when no other reference is specified. There is also the *Ḥadīth Mawqūf,* a collection of sayings or stories related by a Companion of the Prophet regarding what the Prophet said or did. Lastly, the *Ḥadīth Maqṭū'* (the broken tradition) is a similar collection, but related to a follower of one of the Companions.

Islam teaches that even though Muḥammad is the epitome of purity and good character, he was only human, not divine. Muslims revere him, but do not pray to him, not even as an intercessor. Muslims pray directly and exclusively to *Allāh.* It is customary for Muslims when mentioning the Prophet to add: "*Ṣallá Allāh 'alayhi wa-sallam* (may the prayer and peace of *Allāh* be unto him)."

The word 'Islam' is generally understood to possess a twofold meaning: peace, and submission or surrender (to *Allāh*), referring to the attitude of a devout Muslim. 'Muslim', meaning 'one who surrenders', is derived from an Arabic word related to 'Islam'. The conduct and life of such a Muslim is clearly defined. A Muslim must act in accordance with the holy book, *al-Qur'ān,* and with the *Sunnah* (Islamic law), which is based upon the life and sayings *(ḥadīth)* of the Prophet Muḥammad. Every Muslim must practise the five pillars of Islam:

1. *Shahādah.* The declaration of faith: *Ashhadu an lā ilāha illā Allāhu waḥduhu lā-sharīka lahu wa-ashhadu anna Muḥammadan 'Abduhu wa-Rasūlhu* – I testify that there is no god but *Allāh;* He is one, without a partner; and I testify that Muḥammad is His servant *('Abd)* and His Messenger *(Rasūl).* A similar statement is known as *al-kalim al-ṭayyib* (*lit.* the words of purity, the good words):[152] *Lā ilāha illā Allāhu: Muḥammadun Rasūlu-Allāh* – there is no God but *Allāh;* Muḥammad is the Messenger of *Allāh.*

2. *Ṣalāh.* Prayer. Prayer is obligatory and must be performed five times a day. Ritual cleanliness and ablution are required before prayer, as are clean clothes and location, and the removal of shoes. Worshippers must face the *Qiblah,* the direction of the *Ka'bah,* the black stone, in the city of Mecca (the birthplace of Muḥammad), in Saudi Arabia.

3. *Sawm.* Fasting. Able adult Muslims must fast throughout the month of *Ramaḍān,* the ninth month of the lunar calendar, beginning with the sighting of the new moon. Fasting is from the first light of dawn until dusk, and includes abstention from food, drink and sex. *Ṣawm* is regarded principally as a method of self-purification.

4. *Zakāh.* Alms giving or purification tax. *Zakāh* began as a mandatory tax on wealth, but has today become a voluntary act of charity.

5. *Ḥajj.* Pilgrimage. Every Muslim, male or female, who is physically and financially able, must make a pilgrimage to Mecca, at least once in their lifetime.

Muḥammad

The Prophet was born in what is now known as Saudi Arabia.[153] Historian Karen Armstrong relates that in those days it was a terrifying wilderness, inhabited by a race of wild nomads whom the Greeks had called *Sarakenoi* – the Arabs who dwell in tents. This was not always the case, however, and the great-grandfather of Muḥammad, of the tribe of *Quraysh*, had established a thriving trade centre in Mecca, having negotiated protection and trading rights for his community with the rulers of the Byzantine Roman Empire, the Sassanid Persian Empire, Ethiopia and Yemen. The Byzantine and Sassanid Empires, which constituted the great powers of the civilized world at that time, were not interested in invading the desolate land where Arabs had lived since time immemorial.

Judaism was widespread in the region of al-Ḥijāz, especially in Yathrib (later known as Madīnah), and Christianity had also made some headway among the Arabs. But the Arabs were in a state of disunity, and many of the nomadic tribes (the Bedouins) clung to their old paganism. In general, the Bedouin Arabs were suspicious of both Judaism and Christianity, even though they realized that these religions were more sophisticated than their own. They knew that the great powers of the Persian and Byzantine Empires were ready to use both faiths as a means of imperial control. This had become tragically apparent in the kingdom of southern Arabia, which had lost its independence in 570 CE. The tribes were of largely homogeneous race consisting mainly of Arabs who spoke a single language, Arabic.

Against this background, Muḥammad was born in 570 CE in Mecca to his father, 'Abd Allāh, and his mother, Āminah, of the clan of *Hāshim* in the tribe of *Quraysh*. His father died before he was born, and his mother when he was six years old. He was then cared for by his paternal grandfather, 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, who died two years later. Thereafter, his paternal uncle, Abū Ṭālib, raised him. Following the tradition of the time, Muḥammad had a nurse from a nomadic clan, her name being Ḥalīmah.

Very little is known about Muḥammad's boyhood, adolescence and early manhood, although there are numerous legends concerning the early signs of his prophethood. One story describes how his father was seen with a white light between his eyes when on his way to his wife, the night she conceived Muḥammad. Another tale relates how his nurse Ḥalīmah, who was nursing her own son when she took charge of baby Muḥammad, had very little milk; but as soon as she started nursing Muḥammad, her milk became abundant.

Another story recounts how, when he was twelve years old, he accompanied his uncle Abū Ṭālib on a trip to Syria. During their return journey, they met a Christian monk, Baḥīrā, a Nestorian who lived in a hermitage, and was well-read in Christian learning. Baḥīrā noticed how a cloud hovered in the sky above the young Muḥammad, shading him from the heat of the sun, and how the branches of a tree, where Muḥammad and his companions had halted, leaned down over him so that he was always in their shade. Observing other details of

the young boy, Baḥīrā questioned him about the things he felt when he was awake and asleep. Finding all this to be in accordance with a description he had in his possession, he examined the young Muḥammad's back, finding the seal of prophecy between his shoulders. Baḥīrā then told his uncle: "Go back to your own land, and keep him safe from the Jews. By *Allāh*, if they see him, and get to know what I know about him, they will try to harm him."

Mecca, as the birthplace of Muḥammad, together with its people and their beliefs, were endowed with considerable significance in the new religion. The Meccans claimed descent from Abraham through his son Ishmael. According to tradition, their temple, the *Ka'bah* (*lit.* cube), had been built by Abraham for worship of the one God. The *Ka'bah* is now a structure located in the centre of the mosque at Mecca, covered with an embroidered black cloth and containing the Black Stone. Muslims believe that the first *Ka'bah* was constructed by Adam as a place of worship, was later rebuilt by Abraham and his son Ishmael, and was finally restored as a place of worship of the one God by Muḥammad. Before Muḥammad, the *Ka'bah* was a shrine of worship for idolaters who worshipped different gods. But Muḥammad was among the few who felt repelled by idolatry, longing for the religion of Abraham. Such seekers of the truth were known as *ḥunafā'* (sg. *ḥanīf*), meaning 'those who turn away' (from idol worship), later coming to mean 'the upright'. The *ḥunafā'* sought the truth by the light of their own inner consciousness.

At the age of twenty-five, Muḥammad travelled with a caravan to Syria in the service of a wealthy forty-year-old widow from Mecca named Khadījah. So impressed was she with the reports she received regarding Muḥammad's excellent character, and the way he conducted business on her behalf, that soon after his return, she married him. They were married for twenty-six years during which time Muḥammad remained devoted to her alone, taking no other wives. His marriage to Khadījah gave him rank among the notables of Mecca, where he became known as *al-Amīn* (the Trustworthy). Until the end of his life, Muḥammad loved and revered his first wife to the displeasure of his later, younger, wives. His marriage to Khadījah resulted in two sons, who both died in early childhood, and four daughters, of whom only Fāṭimah survived him.

It was Muḥammad's practice to retire with his family each year, for the month of *Ramaḍān*, the month of heat, to a cave on Mount Ḥirā', for meditation. On one of the last nights of *Ramaḍān*, Muḥammad, aged forty at the time, had an extraordinary experience that would forever change him, and would later affect the destiny of millions of people around the world. Torn from sleep in his mountain cave, he felt himself overwhelmed by a divine presence. Later, he explained this ineffable experience by saying that the angel Gabriel had enveloped him in a terrifying embrace such that it felt as though the breath was being forced out of his body. The angel commanded him, "*Iqrā'!* (Read! Recite!)," and when Muḥammad replied, "I cannot read," the voice repeated the command three times until Muḥammad asked: "What can I read (or recite)?" The voice then said:

Read: "In the name of thy Lord who createth –
createth man from a (blood) clot."
Read: "And it is thy Lord the Most Bountiful
who taught by the Pen –
Taught man that which he knew not."

Qur'ān 96:1–5, MGK

This was to be the first revelation, the *sūrah* (verse) of the Clot. When Muḥammad awoke from his sleep or trance, the words remained "as if inscribed upon his heart". He went out of the cave on to the hill side, and heard the same awe-inspiring voice say: "O Muḥammad! Thou art *Allāh's* Messenger, and I am Gabriel." Muḥammad raised his eyes and saw the angel, in the likeness of a man, standing in the sky above the horizon. And again the dreadful voice repeated the same sentence. Muḥammad stood still, turning his face away from the brightness of the vision, but whichever way he turned his face, the angel always stood in front of him. After a long while, the angel vanished, and Muḥammad returned in great distress of mind to his wife, Khadījah, who did her best to console him, reassuring him that *Allāh* would not let a harmful spirit approach him. The year was 610 CE, and the revelation was the first of the revelations that continued for twenty-three years until Muḥammad's death. The complete book of revelations is known as the *Qur'ān,* the faithful recording of the entire revelation of God.

The night of the first revelation would later be referred to in the *Qur'ān,* in the *sūrah* of Power or Destiny *(al-Qadr),* as the Night of Power or the Night of Destiny *(Laylat al-Qadr).* Muslims around the world look forward to this special night every year because they believe that on that night the heavens will open and their wishes will be granted:

Lo! We revealed it on the Night of Power *(Laylat al-Qadr);*
Ah! What will convey unto thee what the Night of Power is?
The Night of Power is better than a thousand months.
The angels and the Spirit descend therein,
by the permission of their Lord, with all decrees.
(That Night is) peace until the rising of the dawn.

Qur'ān 97:1–5, MGK

For the first three years of his mission, the Prophet preached only to his family and his intimate friends. His first converts were few, and included his wife Khadījah, his cousin 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, his servant Zayd, and his friend Abū Bakr. Apart from these few, most of the people of Mecca regarded him as one who had gone a little mad. At the end of the third year, the Prophet received the command to "arise and warn":

O thou enveloped in thy cloak –
arise and warn!

Qur'ān 74:1–2, MGK

The epithet relates to Muḥammad's first encounter with the angel, when, wrapped in his cloak, he ran terrified to his wife. Upon receiving this instruction, Muḥammad began to preach in public, pointing out the folly of idolatry, calling for the worship of the one and only God *(Allāh),* and the embracing of *"Islām"*, as he called his new religion.[154] However, since *"Islām"* literally means 'surrender' or 'submission' to God, his words imply both the name of the religion and surrender to *Allāh:*

The true religion with God is *Islām.*

Qur'ān 3:19, KI

Whoso desires another religion than *Islām,*
it shall not be accepted of him;
In the next world, he shall be among the losers.

Qur'ān 3:85, KI

Today I *(Allāh)* have perfected your religion for you,
and I have completed my blessing upon you,
and I have approved *Islām* for your religion.

Qur'ān 5:3, KI

At the beginning of his mission, the *Quraysh* ignored him, but when he began to speak against their gods, then they became actively hostile, persecuting his poorer disciples, mocking and insulting him. Many wanted to kill him, but were prevented by fear of the blood vengeance of Muḥammad's family clan.

Muḥammad's calls to Islam met with stiff resistance from most of the people of Mecca. The Arabs were afraid that they would lose Mecca's advantage as the main trading and religious centre in Arabia if they abandoned their idols and embraced Islam. But Muḥammad persisted, refusing offers of wealth and power in return for abandoning his mission, and the Muslims continued to experience persecution, ranging from boycott to physical abuse. Despite the persecution, the number of Muslims grew steadily, converts to Islam including Jews and Christians as well as idol-worshipping Arabs. Some Muslims emigrated from Mecca to Ethiopia to escape persecution, since the ruler of Ethiopia protected them from their enemies after he and his church patriarchs had heard the favourable chapter in the *Qur'ān* concerning the mother of Jesus.[155]

The death of Muḥammad's uncle, followed soon after by the death of his wife Khadījah, affected Muḥammad deeply, and exposed him and his followers to more aggressive persecution. Following the end of the mourning period,

Muḥammad married Sawdah, the widow of one of the early converts to Islam. She was the first of several wives taken by the Prophet following the death of his first wife. In 622, the persecution became so fierce that, according to the traditional story, *Allāh* gave the command to Muḥammad and his followers to emigrate. This event, *al-Hijrah* (*lit.* the emigration, the flight), in which they left Mecca for the city of Yathrib, more than 200 miles to the north where there was a large Jewish population, marked the beginning of the Muslim era, which itself became known as *al-Hijrah.* It is from this year that the Muslim system of dating begins. Yathrib was later renamed Madīnah (the City).

After a number of years and some significant battles, the Prophet and his followers were able to return to Mecca, where Muḥammad forgave his enemies and established Islam definitively. By the time he died in 632, at the age of 63, the greater part of Arabia had accepted Islam, and within a century of his death, Islam had spread as far west as Spain and as far east as China. In establishing the Islamic State, Prophet Muḥammad made it inclusive of the Arabian Jews and Christians. Their persons, properties, churches and synagogues were protected. Freedom of worship was guaranteed, and they controlled their own community affairs with their own civil and religious laws and courts.

The Qur'ān

According to the teaching of the *Qur'ān,* Muslims believe that all the prophets were sent by *Allāh* to their respective peoples:

> And We never sent a Messenger save with the language of his folk,
> that he might make (the message) clear for them.
> Then *Allāh* sendeth whom He will astray, and guideth whom He will.
> He is mighty, the Wise.
>
> *Qur'ān 14:4, MGK*

The prophets all had the same mission and message: to guide people to the right path. Muslims believe that the three revealed monotheistic religions – Islam, Christianity and Judaism – can be traced back to Abraham through his two sons, Isaac and Ishmael. The prophets of these religions were directly descended from him: Moses and Jesus from Isaac, Muḥammad from Ishmael. Muslims refer to Christians and Jews as the People of the Book *(Ahl al-Kitāb).* Also included among the People of the Book are the *Mājūs* (Zoroastrians and the followers of all Iranian religions, and the Sabaeans (Mandaeans).

The history of the *Qur'ān* is a part of Muslim tradition. Marmaduke Pickthall, novelist, author and convert to Islam, writes in the introduction to his translation of the *Qur'ān,* first published in 1930:

> All the *sūrahs* of the *Qur'ān* had been recorded in writing before the Prophet's death, and many Muslims had committed the whole *Qur'ān* to

> memory. But the written *sūrahs* were dispersed among the people; and when, in a battle which took place during the Caliphate (successorship) of Abū Bakr – that is to say, within two years of the Prophet's death – a large number of those who knew the whole *Qur'ān* by heart were killed, a collection of the whole *Qur'ān* was made and put in writing. In the Caliphate of 'Uthmān, all existing copies of *sūrahs* were called in, and an authoritative version, based on Abū Bakr's collection and the testimony of those who had (learned) the whole *Qur'ān* by heart, was compiled exactly in the present form and order, which is regarded as traditional, and as the arrangement of the Prophet himself, the Caliph 'Uthmān and his helpers being Comrades of the Prophet, and the most devout students of the revelation. The *Qur'ān* has thus been very carefully preserved.
>
> The arrangement is not easy to understand. Revelations of various dates and on different subjects are to be found together in *sūrahs;* some of the Madīnah *sūrahs,* though of late revelation, are placed first, and the very early Meccan *sūrahs* at the end. But the arrangement is not haphazard, as some have hastily supposed. Closer study will reveal a sequence and significance, as for instance, with regard to the placing of the very early Meccan *sūrahs* at the end. The inspiration of the Prophet progressed from inmost things to outward things, whereas most people find their way through outward things to things within.
>
> *Marmaduke Pickthall, The Meaning of the Glorious Koran, MGK pp.18–19*

It is Islamic belief that the text of the *Qur'ān* extant today is, syllable for syllable, exactly the same as the Prophet had offered to the world as the word of *Allāh.* It is also believed that the *Qur'ān* was revealed to Muḥammad over a period of twenty-three years, coming to him line by line, verse by verse, chapter by chapter. According to the *Ḥadīth,* Muḥammad once said "Never did I receive a revelation without thinking that my soul has been torn away from me."[156] Sometimes, he said, the verbal content was clear enough: he seemed to see the angel Gabriel and to hear his words. But at other times it was more painful and incoherent, "Like the ringing of a bell (*lit.* striking of *ajrās* – little bells – on stone), penetrating my very heart, rending me, and that way is the most painful."[157]

The Arabs found the *Qur'ān* quite astonishing: it was unlike any other literature they had previously encountered. Some were converted immediately, believing that divine inspiration alone could account for this extraordinary language. It was especially impressive because it was believed that Muḥammad was unlettered *(ummī),* the word *ummī* being used in the *Qur'ān* to mean one who cannot read or write.[158]

Some Western scholars, however, have pointed out that Muḥammad, as a businessman, would almost certainly have grasped at least the rudiments of reading and writing. They have therefore suggested that *ummī* referred to the community of Gentiles, those who did not know – who were 'unlettered' in –

the scriptures of the Jews. In this sense, Muḥammad was sent to the "unlettered ones *(ummīyīn)*" who had not received a scripture from God:

> He it is who hath sent among the unlettered ones *(ummīyīn)*,
> a Messenger of their own, to recite unto them His revelations,
> and to make them grow and to teach them the scripture and wisdom,
> though heretofore they were indeed in error manifest.
>
> *Qur'ān 62:2, MGK*

Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, the great thirteenth-century Sufi Master and poet, author of the *Maśnavī* and a renowned scholar of Islamic religion and exegesis even in his own time, gives a characteristically mystic interpretation to the term:

> The Prophet is called 'unlettered', not because he was unable to write or learn. He was called 'unlettered' because his knowledge and wisdom were innate, not acquired.
>
> *Rūmī, Fīhi mā Fīhi 38:12–14, KFF p.142; cf. DRA p.151, SOU p.148*

Many Arabic-reading Muslims may have committed parts of the *Qur'ān* to memory; if not, then at least they are able to read it. But reading and remembering the *Qur'ān* is one thing, to grasp its meaning is quite another; for although some verses or chapters are easy to understand, most are not. Yet the *Qur'ān* itself claims to be easy to remember and to comprehend:

> And We have made (this scripture) easy in thy language,
> only that they may heed (remember).
>
> *Qur'ān 44:58, MGK*

> And, in truth, We have made the *Qur'ān* easy to remember; …
> But is there any that remembereth?
>
> *Qur'ān 54:17, 22, MGK*

In fact, the *Qur'ān* is actually so obscure in places that a great many volumes of interpretation have been written by Muslim scholars such as Ṭabārī. Numerous scholars and Sufis, including al-Ghazālī and Ibn 'Arabī, have written entire treatises just on the enigmatic parable contained in the famous Light Verse:

> God is the light *(nūr)* of the heavens and the earth;
> The likeness of His light *(nūr)* is as a niche wherein is a lamp –
> (the lamp in a glass, the glass as it were a glittering star) –
> kindled from a blessed Tree,
> an olive that is neither of the East nor of the West,
> whose oil well nigh would shine,
> even if no fire touched it;

> Light *(nūr)* upon light *(nūr):*
> (God guides to His light whom He will).
>
> *Qur'ān 24:35, KI*

The diversity of interpretations only demonstrates that in the absence of the original writer, the meaning will remain uncertain.

The *Qur'ān* is also repetitive, the same verse or verses appearing in various places, with or without variations. The content is wide ranging. It speaks of the might and mercy of *Allāh* and of His Attributes; it explains how man was created and for what purpose (to worship *Allāh*); it portrays the delights of paradise and the torments of hell. It has its own, often variant, versions of Bible sayings and stories, including those of previous prophets and others – Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Isaac, Ishmael, Jacob, Pharaoh, Solomon, Joseph, John the Baptist, Jesus, the Virgin Mary and so on. It contains guidelines regarding almost every aspect of a Muslim's life and afterlife, including marriage, inheritance, alms giving, prayer, and conduct in war and peace. It mentions specific battles and events relating to the nation of Islam, and refers to particular events in the life of Muhammad, not omitting his marriages and squabbles with his wives. It recommends looking to the Prophet as a human exemplar, to be followed and imitated:

> Verily in the Messenger of *Allāh,* ye have a good example
> for him who looketh unto *Allāh* and the Last Day,
> and remembereth *Allāh* much.
>
> *Qur'ān 33:21, MGK*

Throughout the *Qur'ān,* the teachings of Jesus and the Jewish prophets and patriarchs are treated with respect. It indicates that these teachings are all the same:

> Say, (O Muslims): we believe in *Allāh,*
> and that which is revealed unto us,
> and that which was revealed unto Abraham and Ishmael,
> and Isaac, and Jacob, and the tribes,
> and that which Moses and Jesus received,
> and that which the Prophets received from their Lord.
> We make no distinction between any of them,
> and unto Him we have surrendered.
>
> *Qur'ān 2:136, MGK*

However, from saying that there is no difference between any of the Prophets and what they have received from God, the *Qur'ān* goes on to condemn the Jews and Christians themselves for distorting the original message revealed in their

scriptures. It calls them unbelievers, saying that no other religion is acceptable to *Allāh* except Islam:

> And the Jews say: "*'Uzayr* ('Ezra) is the son of *Allāh*,"
> and the Christians say: "The Messiah is the son of *Allāh*."
> That is their saying with their mouths.
> They imitate the saying of those who disbelieved of old.
> *Allāh* (Himself) fighteth against them. How perverse are they!
>
> *Qur'ān 9:30, MGK*

> They have taken as lords beside *Allāh* their rabbis and their monks,
> and the Messiah son of Mary,
> when they were bidden to worship only one God.
> There is no God save Him.
> Be He glorified from all that they ascribe as partner (unto Him)!
>
> *Qur'ān 9:31, MGK*

> Whoso desires another religion than *Islām (lit.* submission to *Allāh)*,
> it shall not be accepted of him;
> In the next world, he shall be among the losers.
>
> *Qur'ān 3:85, KI*

The *Qur'ān* even goes on to say that Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian:

> Abraham was not a Jew, not yet a Christian;
> But he was an upright man *(ḥanīfan)*
> who had surrendered (to *Allāh*) (a Muslim),
> and he was not of the idolaters.
>
> *Qur'ān 3:67, MGK*

The Night Journey (al-Mi'rāj)

One of the major events in Muḥammad's life, said to have taken place in 620 or 621 and regarded as deeply significant in Islam, is *al-Mi'rāj* or *al-Isrā'* – the Night Journey, when Gabriel accompanied Muḥammad on an ascent through the seven heavens, meeting various prophets of the past as he goes:

> And verily he saw him (Gabriel) yet another time
> by the Lote Tree of the utmost boundary *(Sidrat al-muntahá)*,
> nigh unto which is the garden of abode.
> When that which shroudeth did enshroud the Lote Tree,
> the eye turned not aside nor yet was overbold –
> Verily he saw one of the greater revelations of his Lord.
>
> *Qur'ān 53:13–18, MGK*

In the *Qur'ān,* this is symbolized, seemingly, as a journey from *al-masjid al-ḥarām* (the inviolable place of worship) to *al-masjid al-aqṣá* (the far distant place of worship):

> Glorified be He who carried His servant by night
> from the inviolable place of worship *(al-masjid al-ḥarām)*
> to the far distant place of worship *(al-masjid al-aqṣá),*
> the neighbourhood whereof we have blessed,
> that we might show him of our tokens!
> Lo He, only He, is the Hearer, the Seer.
>
> *Qur'ān 17:1, MGK*

In later times two mosques, built in Mecca and Jerusalem, respectively, were given these names. The *Qur'ān* only touches briefly on this event, but a detailed description is found in a *ḥadīth* of which there are several versions, differing in details and chronology, as well as which prophet is encountered in which heaven. Some versions mention *Burāq,* a white horselike animal that carries Muḥammad and Gabriel on their ascent; others mention a ladder instead. Some mention *Kawthar,* the river in paradise, while others do not; some mention his visit to paradise and hell, yet others do not. The version recorded in al-Bukhārī's collection of *ḥadīth,* as narrated by Anas ibn Mālik, reads:

> Mālik ibn Ṣa'ṣa'ah said that *Allāh*'s Apostle described to them his Night Journey, saying, "While I was lying in *al-Ḥaṭīm* or *al-Ḥijr,* suddenly someone came to me and cut my body open from here to here."
>
> I asked al-Jarūd who was by my side, "What does he mean?" He said, "It means from his throat to his pubic area,"or said, "from the top of the chest."
>
> The Prophet further said, "He then took out my heart. Then a gold tray of Belief was brought to me, and my heart was washed and was filled (with Belief), and then returned to its original place. Then a white animal which was smaller than a mule and bigger than a donkey was brought to me."
>
> (On this al-Jarūd asked, "Was it the *Burāq,* O Abū Ḥamzah?" I (*i.e.* Anas) replied in the affirmative).
>
> The Prophet said, "The animal's step (was so wide that it) reached the farthest point within the reach of the animal's sight. I was carried on it, and Gabriel set out with me till we reached the nearest heaven. When he asked for the gate to be opened, it was asked, 'Who is it?' Gabriel answered, 'Gabriel.' It was asked, 'Who is accompanying you?' Gabriel replied, 'Muḥammad.' It was asked, 'Has Muḥammad been called?' Gabriel replied in the affirmative. Then it was said, 'He is welcomed. What an excellent visit his is!'
>
> "The gate was opened, and when I went over the first heaven, I saw Adam there. Gabriel said (to me). 'This is your father, Adam; pay him your

greetings.' So I greeted him and he returned the greeting to me and said, 'You are welcomed, O pious son and pious Prophet.'

"Then Gabriel ascended with me till we reached the second heaven. Gabriel asked for the gate to be opened. It was asked, 'Who is it?' Gabriel answered, 'Gabriel.' It was asked, 'Who is accompanying you?' Gabriel replied, 'Muḥammad.' It was asked, 'Has he been called?' Gabriel answered in the affirmative. Then it was said, 'He is welcomed. What an excellent visit his is!' The gate was opened.

"When I went over the second heaven, there I saw Yaḥyá (John the Baptist) and 'Īsá (Jesus) who were cousins of each other. Gabriel said (to me), 'These are John and Jesus; pay them your greetings.' So I greeted them and both of them returned my greetings to me and said, 'You are welcomed, O pious brother and pious Prophet.'"

Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 5:58.227, HSB

The same pattern is then repeated for the subsequent heavens. In the third heaven, Muḥammad meets Yūsuf (Joseph), in the fourth heaven Idrīs (Enoch), in the fifth Hārūn (Aaron), in the sixth Mūsá (Moses), in the seventh Ibrāhīm (Abraham). The story continues:

"Then I was made to ascend to *Sidrat al-muntahá* (the Lote Tree of the utmost boundary). Behold! Its fruits were like the jars of *Ḥijr* (a place near Madīnah) and its leaves were as big as the ears of elephants. Gabriel said, 'This is the Lote Tree of the utmost boundary.' Behold! There ran four rivers, two were hidden and two were visible. I asked, 'What are these two kinds of rivers, O Gabriel?' He replied, 'As for the hidden rivers, they are two rivers in paradise, and the visible rivers are the Nile and the Euphrates.'

"Then *al-Bayt al-Ma'mūr* (the Sacred House) was shown to me and a container full of wine and another full of milk and a third full of honey were brought to me. I took the milk. Gabriel remarked, 'This is the Islamic religion which you and your followers are following.' Then the prayers were enjoined on me: they were fifty prayers a day.

"When I returned, I passed by Moses who asked (me), 'What have you been ordered to do?' I replied, 'I have been ordered to offer fifty prayers a day.' Moses said, 'Your followers cannot bear fifty prayers a day, and by *Allāh,* I have tested people before you, and I have tried my level best with Benei Israel (in vain). Go back to your Lord and ask for reduction to lessen your followers' burden.'

"So I went back, and *Allāh* reduced ten prayers for me. Then again I came to Moses, but he repeated the same as he had said before. Then again I went back to *Allāh,* and He reduced ten more prayers. When I came back to Moses he said the same, I went back to *Allāh* and He ordered me to observe ten prayers a day. When I came back to Moses, he repeated the

same advice, so I went back to *Allāh* and was ordered to observe five prayers a day.

"When I came back to Moses, he said, 'What have you been ordered?' I replied, 'I have been ordered to observe five prayers a day.' He said, 'Your followers cannot bear five prayers a day, and no doubt, I have got an experience of the people before you, and I have tried my level best with Benei Israel, so go back to your Lord and ask for reduction to lessen your followers' burden.'

"I said, 'I have requested so much of my Lord that I feel ashamed, but I am satisfied now and surrender to *Allāh*'s Order.' When I left, I heard a voice saying, 'I have passed my Order and have lessened the burden of my worshippers.'"

Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 5:58.227, HSB

Other versions of the story also mention that Gabriel was unable to continue on with Muḥammad into the presence of God, but stayed back at some distance, something which has again been the subject of diverse interpretations.

Marriages

Like the Arabs of his time, Muḥammad had more than one wife, and the *Qur'ān* permits polygyny, up to four wives at a time:

And if ye fear that ye will not deal fairly by the orphans,
marry of the women, who seem good to you, two or three or four;
And if ye fear that ye cannot do justice (to so many),
then one (only) or (the captives) that your right hand possess.
Thus it is more likely that ye will not do injustice.

Qur'ān 4:3, MGK

The Prophet, however, was an exception, and the *Qur'ān* did not impose any limit on the number of wives he could have,[159] a matter which has drawn comment from non-Muslims. Many non-Muslims regard polygyny as demeaning to women. Muḥammad's detractors have also suggested that his marriages show that even though he was a prophet, he was still still subject to sexual desire. They see his marriages as giving the wrong example to Muslim men, who look up to him as their exemplar.

Muslims, on the other hand, take the *Qur'ān* as the word of God, and when God has allowed something, no room remains for question or debate. They also point out the Prophet was monogamous during the twenty-five years of his marriage to his first wife Khadījah, demonstrating that he had no problem with lust. Muḥammad was a man of fifty when Khadījah died. It was also three years after the *Hijrah,* and it is said that apart from his marriage to 'Āyishah, the

daughter of Abū Bakr, his closest and most loyal companion, his later marriages were to give homes to widows and to forge political alliances.

Stories concerning his wives vary, however. According to one tradition, he married thirteen in all,[160] though he had no more than ten at one time; another records than he married only ten.[161] The great Sufi, Rūmī, observes, perhaps tongue in cheek:

> God Most High and Mighty showed the Prophet a narrow and hidden way (to refine himself), and that was to marry women, so that he might endure their tyranny, listen to their absurdities and let them ride roughshod over him.... The way of Jesus was to struggle in solitude and not to gratify one's lust; the way of Muḥammad is to endure the tyranny and grief inflicted by men and women. If you cannot go the way of Muḥammad, at least take the way of Jesus, lest you be altogether deprived.
>
> *Rūmī, Fīhi mā Fīhi 20:7–9, 5–8, KFF pp.86–87; cf. DRA pp.98–99, SOU pp.90–91*

The Death of Muḥammad

It should be recalled that Muḥammad never pretended to any divine status. He was only a messenger, a human being who lived, ate, married, procreated, fought battles with the sword, took slaves and the spoils of wars, had family squabbles, forged political alliances, and prayed and worshipped God. Friends and foes agreed that although he was honest, upright and of excellent character, nevertheless he was only human. When he died in 632, in the arms of his favourite wife, 'Āyishah, his death came as a big shock to his followers. According to tradition, 'Umar, one of his closest companions and father of his third wife, Ḥafṣah, refused to believe that the Prophet was dead. 'Umar addressed the crowd saying that Muḥammad was not dead, but had gone to *Allāh* for a little while, like Moses on Mount Sinai. Abū Bakr, the closest companion of Muḥammad and the father of 'Āyishah, tried to calm 'Umar, but 'Umar would not listen. Abū Bakr then addressed the crowd: "O men, those who worshipped Muḥammad must know that Muḥammad is dead. But for those who worship *Allāh, Allāh* lives and will not die." He then quoted a verse from the *Qur'ān* that nobody remembered having heard before:

> Muḥammad is but a Messenger, Messengers (the like of whom)
> have passed away before him.
> Will it be that, when he dieth or is slain,
> ye will turn back on your heels?
> He who turneth back doth not hurt *Allāh*,
> and *Allāh* will reward the thankful.
>
> *Qur'ān 3:144, MGK*

Muḥammad died in 632 without appointing a successor, immediately giving rise to the formation of several divisions among his companions and family. Of his four daughters and three sons, only his daughter Fāṭimah was still alive, his sons having died in infancy. Fāṭimah was married to Muḥammad's cousin, 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (*b.c.*600), and had two sons, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn. After some negotiations, Muḥammad's father-in-law, Abū Bakr (*b.c.*573) was chosen to succeed him in leading the *Ummah* (Community) of Islam, and was given the title of Caliph *(Khalīfah)* or successor. Abū Bakr died after two years, having appointed 'Umar (*b.*581), another father-in-law of Muḥammad, as his successor. 'Umar held the position for ten years, greatly extending and consolidating the Islamic Empire by conquest into Egypt, Palestine, Syria, and the Sassanid Persian Empire. In 644, 'Umar died of the wounds inflicted by a disaffected Persian slave, and his successor, 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān, was elected by a council appointed by 'Umar on his deathbed. 'Uthmān established an authoritative version of the *Qur'ān* from the memories of Muḥammad's companions and such written records as existed. This was then edited, and a definitive version bearing his name was distributed throughout the Islamic Empire. But his reign was marred by favouritism towards his clan members, the Ummayads, and 'Uthmān was murdered in a revolt against the Caliphate in 656. Muḥammad's cousin, 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib became the fourth Caliph, though he was immediately challenged unsuccessfully by an aristocratic faction led by Muḥammad's widow, 'Āyishah. His own followers were then split by the formation of a breakaway group, the *Khawārif,* and at the same time he entered into a civil war with Mu'āwiyah, the Islamic governor of Syria. 'Alī was murdered in 661 by one of the *Khawārif,* and Mu'āwiyah seized the Caliphate, founding the first Muslim dynasty, the Ummayads. These first four Caliphs became known as *al-Rāshidūn,* the rightly guided Caliphs, because they are believed to have governed in accordance with Muḥammad's principles. Later Caliphs and rulers, it is said, did not live up to those just and egalitarian principles, and Muslims look back at the period of *al-Rāshidūn* as a golden age.

The unity of the *Ummah,* which had been so important to Muḥammad, was broken by a fundamental split between the main body of the Muslims (the *Sunnī*) and the *Shī'ah,* a division who gave allegiance to 'Alī (the fourth Caliph). According to Shi'ite belief, the Prophet Muḥammad entrusted the spiritual leadership (the immamate) of the Muslim community to his closest male heir, his cousin and son-in-law 'Alī, the husband of his daughter Fāṭimah. 'Alī, the first *Imām,* passed it on to his first son, Ḥasan who passed it on to the second, Ḥusayn, who was killed fighting against the Caliph Yazīd at the battle of Karbalā', the central tragic event of *Shī'ah* history. Today, the *Shī'ah* constitute the majority of the population of Iran and Iraq, and their chain of *Imāms* continues. Many believe that 'Alī was initiated by Muḥammad into the divine mysteries, and that he was the first Sufi.

Sufism

Sufism is the mystical tradition in Islam. But – like all these introductory sections – to try and summarize its history and main aspects is like pouring an ocean into a cup: a tiny sample is collected, while most overflows and is left out. Nevertheless, an outline can be given that will serve as an introduction to a complex subject.

Sufism can simply be defined as a practical path leading to God, learned from and practised under the supervision of a spiritual teacher, generally called a *Murshid, Shaykh* or *Pīr*. Yet such elements of Sufism are universal features of mysticism, existing long before Islam. Sufis and most other mystics say that mystical experiences transcend time and space and the limitations of the physical world of life and death; as such, mysticism cannot be understood or explained by any normal mode of perception or described in a physical language. It is like trying to describe the world to one born blind, or music to one born deaf. Sufis say, "He who tastes, knows", or as Rūmī puts it, "He who tastes not, knows not."[162] Hujwīrī relates in his *Kashf al-Maḥjūb,* the oldest Persian treatise on Sufism, that al-Qushayrī said, "The *Ṣūfī* is like the disease called *birsām* (pleurisy), which begins with delirium and ends in silence; for when you have attained 'fixity', you are dumb."[163]

The origins of Sufism are obscure. Some historians maintain that the term *Ṣūfī* came into use in the eighth century CE, at least 200 years after the founding of Islam. Others believe that it was known at the time of Muḥammad. Nobody is certain. R.A. Nicholson comments:

> The truth is that Sufism is a complex thing, and therefore no simple answer can be given to the question how it originated.
>
> *R.A. Nicholson, Mystics of Islam, MOI p.9*

And:

> The Sufis are not a sect, they have no dogmatic system, the *ṭarā'iq* or paths by which they seek God are in number as the souls of men and vary infinitely, though a family likeness may be traced in them all. Descriptions of such a protean phenomenon must differ widely from one another, and the impression produced in each case will depend on the choice of materials and the prominence given to this or that aspect of the many-sided whole.
>
> *R.A. Nicholson, Mystics of Islam, MOI p.27*

Even the origins of the name are uncertain, and have been so for more than a millennium. Hujwīrī says:

> Some assert that the *Ṣūfī* is so called because he wears a woollen garment *(jāmah-'i ṣūf),* others that he is so called because he is in the first rank

> *(ṣaff-i avval),* others say it is because the *Ṣūfīs* claim to belong to the *aṣḥāb-i ṣūffah* (the people of the bench who gathered around the Prophet's mosque). Others, again, declare that the name is derived from *ṣafā'* (purity).
>
> *Hujwīrī, Kashf al-Maḥjūb III, KM p.30*

Yet others maintain that the word *Ṣūfī* originated from the Greek *sophia* (wisdom). Even so, the derivation from the word *ṣūf* (wool) is the origin generally accepted because of the coarse woollen garment worn by the prophet Muḥammad and his companions, which became a distinguishing mark of the early Muslim ascetics. Sufism *(taṣawwuf)* is concerned with the process of becoming a Sufi. Hujwīrī explains:

> *Ṣūfī* is a name which is given, and has formerly been given, to the perfect Saints and spiritual adepts. One of the *Shaykhs* says: *"Man ṣaffāhu al-ḥubb fa-huwa ṣāfin wa-man ṣaffāhu al-ḥabīb fa-huwa Ṣūfīyun"* – "He that is purified by love is pure, and he that is absorbed in the Beloved and has abandoned all else is a *Ṣūfī.*" The name has no derivation answering to etymological requirements, inasmuch as Sufism is too exalted to have any genus from which it might be derived; for the derivation of one thing from another demands homogeneity. All that exists is the opposite of purity *(ṣafā'),* and things are not derived from their opposites. To *Ṣūfīs* the meaning of Sufism is clearer than the sun, and does not need any explanation or indication. Since *'Ṣūfī'* admits of no explanation, all the world are interpreters thereof, whether they recognize the dignity of the name or no, at the time when they learn its meaning....
>
> Its followers ... are of three kinds: the *Ṣūfī,* the *Mutaṣawwif* and the *Mustaṣwif.* The *Ṣūfī* is he that is dead to self and living by the Truth; he has escaped from the grip of human faculties and has really attained (to God). The *Mutaṣawwif* is he that seeks to reach this rank by means of self-mortification *(mujāhadat)* and in his search rectifies his conduct in accordance with their (the *Ṣūfīs*) example. The *Mustaṣwif* is he that makes himself like them (the *Ṣūfīs*) for the sake of money and wealth and power and worldly advantage, but has no knowledge of these two things.... Therefore, the *Ṣūfī* is a man of union *(ṣāḥib-wuṣūl),* the *Mutaṣawwif* a man of principles *(ṣāḥib-uṣūl),* and the *Mustaṣwif* a man of superfluities *(ṣāḥib-fuḍūl).*
>
> *Hujwīrī, Kashf al-Maḥjūb III, KM pp.34–35*

The religion to which all Sufis relate is Islam, and most of the innumerable Sufi writings are interpretations of the teachings found in the *Qur'ān* and *Ḥadīth* (the sayings of Muḥammad). In their teachings, Sufis use many of the stories contained in the *Qur'ān* that originated from the Bible, including those of Joseph, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Mary. Even so, there are many similarities between Sufi thought and practice and the mysticism of other cultures. T.P. Hughes writes:

> It might at first sight appear almost an impossibility for mysticism to engraft itself upon the legal system of the *Qur'ān* and the *Ḥadīth*, with the detailed ritual and cold formality which are so strikingly exemplified in Islam; but it would appear that from the very days of Muḥammad, there have been always those who, whilst they called themselves Muslims, set aside the literal meaning of the words of Muḥammad for a supposed mystic or spiritual interpretation, and it is generally admitted by Sufis that one of the great founders of their system, as found in Islam, was the adopted son and son-in-law of the Prophet, 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib. The Sufis themselves admit that their religious system has always existed in the world, prior to the mission of Muḥammad, and the unprejudiced student of their system will observe that *taṣawwuf*, or Sufism, is but a Muslim adaptation of the *Vedānta* school of Hindu philosophers, and which also we find in the writings of old academics of Greece, and Sir William Jones thought Plato learned from the sages of the East.
>
> *T.P. Hughes, in "Ṣūfī", Dictionary of Islam, DOI p.609*

Sufism has always been identified as the spiritual path *(ṭarīqah)* of Islam, and it has been called Islamic mysticism by Western scholars because of its resemblance to Christian and other forms of mysticism. Unlike Christian mysticism, however, Sufism is a continuous historical and even institutionalized phenomenon in the Muslim world that has had millions of adherents down to the present day. Sufis and Sufi orders are found all over the world.

The literature of early Islamic spirituality falls more or less into four phases:[164]

1. The pre-Sufi phase, including the *Qur'ān*, the central ritual elements of Islam, and the accounts of Muḥammad's *Mi'rāj* (Ascent).
2. The early period of Sufism, including the sayings and writings of the early Sufi Masters such as Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Dhū al-Nūn Miṣrī of Egypt, Rābi'ah of Baṣrah, Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī, al-Muḥāsibī and Junayd of Baghdad. Collections of their sayings have largely been preserved in the works of later writers. This phase extends from the time of Ḥasan of Baṣrah (*d.*728) to that of Niffārī (*d.*965).
3. The formative phase of Sufi literature, embracing all aspects of life and society, beginning with Sarrāj (*d.*988) and extending to al-Qushayrī (*d.*1074).
4. The works of 'Aṭṭār (*d.*1220), Rūmī (*d.*1273) and Ibn 'Arabī (*d.*1240) during the seventh century of Islam.

Sufi Orders and Teachings

Sufi orders are based on the Master-disciple relationship as a chain going back through the years all the way to the Prophet. Though institutionalized, these orders are not so much social institutions as a means of mystical transmission

from Master to disciple. The significance of the different orders lies in the spiritual practices that are preserved within those lineages.

The north African scholar Muḥammad al-Sanūsī al-Idrīsī (*d.*1859) listed forty Sufi orders known to him, among them being: the *ṭarīqah Muḥammadīyah* with the Prophet Muḥammad (*d.*632) as founder; the *Ṣiddīqīyah* with Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq (*d.*634) as founder; the *'Uwaysīyah* with 'Uways al-Qaranī (C7th) as founder; the *Ḥatimīyah* with Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn 'Arabī (*d.*1240) as founder; the *Naqshbandīyah* (called the Golden chain by some, originating with 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib) with Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshbandī (*d.*1389) as founder; the *Mawlawīyah* with Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (*d.*1273) as founder; and the *Chishtīyah* with Mu'īn al-Dīn Chishtī (*d.*1236) as founder. There are many more Sufi orders with many different branches and distinctive methods, but the goal is one: ultimate union with the Beloved, God, the Creator, the Truth.

A Sufi Master is known by the Arabic *Shaykh* (Elder) or *Murshid* (Master) and the Persian *Pīr* (Elder), the latter title also being given to religious scholars. He assumes an extraordinary role as an intermediary linked to the Prophet and to God. Abū Ḥafṣ al-Suhravardī (*d.*1234) writes:

> When the sincere disciple enters under obedience of the Master, keeping his company and learning his manners, a spiritual state flows from within the Master to within the disciple, like one lamp lighting another. The speech of the Master inspires the interior of the disciple, so that the Master's words become the treasury of spiritual states. The state is transferred from the Master to the disciple by keeping company and by hearing speech. This only applies to the disciple who restricts himself to the Master, who sheds the desire of his soul, and who is annihilated in the Master by giving up his own will.
>
> *Abū Ḥafṣ al-Suhravardī, in SGS p.124*

The essence of the Sufi message is that the experience of God is real; that God is everything and everything is God. Hence it is related that when Rābi'ah al-'Adawīyah was once asked, "Do you actually see Him whom you worship?" She replied, "I would not worship Him unless I saw Him."[165] Junayd puts it another way: "Sufism is that God makes you die to yourself, and be resurrected in Him."[166] This world is illusory, no more than a dream; in order to experience higher realities, and ultimately merge in God *(fanā'-fī Allāh),* it is necessary to die to this world so that the inner eye will open to the spiritual worlds. The Sufi ideal is to possess nothing and to be possessed by nothing; to live in the world, but not to be of the world.

Sufi adepts have described man's relationship to the Creator and the creation in many different ways. God, the Creator and macrocosm, is commonly portrayed as an Ocean, with man, the microcosm, as a drop or part of that Ocean. God is the whole and each part of the creation in some way reflects the whole:

man is not merely a drop that can merge with the Ocean, but a drop that contains the Ocean, a microcosm that contains the macrocosm. Sufis explain that the divine Spirit is the essence of man; the body is merely the outward physical form containing the divine spark. The universe was created for the service of God, and for that purpose alone. If man deviates from that purpose and follows his animal nature, he will be dragged to the lowest level. But if, under the guidance of a *Shaykh* or *Murshid,* he travels the spiritual path, he will be delivered from the confines of the material world into the limitless Reality of a spiritual life whose ultimate goal is the union with the divine Beloved, with God. This is a path of discipline that leads to actual experience of the spiritual realities. R.A. Nicholson describes the process by which, in traditional Sufi thinking, a traveller on the Sufi path attains union with God:

> The disciple must, mystically, always bear his *Murshid* in mind, and become mentally absorbed in him through a constant meditation and contemplation of him. The teacher must be his shield against all evil thoughts. The spirit of the teacher follows him in all his efforts, and accompanies him wherever he may be, quite as a guardian spirit. To such a degree is this carried that he sees the Master in all men and in all things, just as a willing subject is under the influence of the magnetizer. This condition is called 'self-annihilation' in the *Murshid* or *Shaykh.* The latter finds, in his own visionary dreams, the degree which the disciple has reached, and whether or not his spirit has become bound to his own.
>
> At this stage, the *Shaykh* passes him over to the spiritual influence of the long-deceased *Pīr* or original founder of the Order, and he sees the latter only by the spiritual aid of the *Shaykh.* This is called 'self-annihilation' in the *Pīr.* He now becomes so much a part of the *Pīr* as to possess all his spiritual powers.
>
> The third grade leads him, also through the spiritual aid of the *Shaykh,* up to the Prophet himself, whom he now sees in all things. This state is called 'self-annihilation' in the Prophet.
>
> The fourth degree leads him even to God. He becomes united with the Deity and sees Him in all things.
>
> *R.A. Nicholson, Mystics of Islam, MOI p.140*

In order to progress on the spiritual journey the disciple *(murīd)* must follow the discipline prescribed by his *Murshid.* The foremost purpose of the discipline is to tame the ego and subdue what the Sufis called the *nafs* – the lower or base tendencies of the mind, sometimes translated as the carnal soul. The *nafs* is the cause of all sin and base qualities, and the duty of the seeker or wayfarer *(sālik)* is to struggle against it, and thus to purify the soul. To describe this struggle, Sufis have referred to a *ḥadīth* of the Prophet who called this struggle the greater holy war *(al-jihād al-akbar).*

The process of purification takes the soul through three stages, based on three different Quranic expressions, namely: *al-nafs al-ammārah bi al-sū'* (the soul commanding to evil, the carnal soul), *al-nafs al-lawwāmah* (the reproaching or accusing soul, the conscience) and *al-nafs al-muṭma'innah* (the soul at peace):

> I do not exculpate myself.
> Lo! the (human) soul enjoineth unto evil *(al-nafs al-ammāratun bi al-sū'),*
> save that whereon my Lord hath mercy.
> Lo! my Lord is forgiving, merciful.
>
> *Qur'ān 12:53, MGK*

> Nay, I swear by the accusing soul *(al-nafs al-lawwāmah).*
>
> *Qur'ān 75:2, MGK*

> O soul at peace *(al-nafs al-muṭma'innah),*
> return *(irji'ī)* unto thy Lord,
> well pleased (thyself), well pleasing (unto Him)!
> Enter thou among my servants!
> Enter thou my paradise!
>
> *Qur'ān 89:27–30, KI*

In the first stage, the wayfarer struggles against the carnal soul *(al-nafs al-ammārah).* This is the human tendency to disobey God, and to take pleasure in evil thoughts and deeds. Its inclination is towards gossip, backbiting, vain talk, pride, selfishness, lust, hatred, anger, jealousy, greed and so on. The struggle against *al-nafs al-ammārah* thus involves purification of the body, tongue and mind.

When the Sufi has subjugated *al-nafs al-ammārah,* he enters upon the second stage of purification in which he is able to respond readily to the call of the reproaching soul, *al-nafs al-lawwāmah.* It is *al-nafs al-lawwāmah* that reproaches man for his evil deeds and impels him to acts of mercy and generosity. It reflects the development of a refined conscience.

After this stage or station has become firmly established, the Sufi enters the third stage, that of the contented soul or the soul at peace, *al-nafs al-muṭma'innah.* Here, the Sufi fully develops the tendency to obey God and to act in perfect harmony with His will. He is filled with love, mercy, kindness and a burning zeal to help others.

In order to reach this high station, a Sufi must constantly strive to control his ego and to curb his anger and impatience. He must eat less, sleep less, talk less, and deny himself the pleasure of other people's company. Sometimes, he withdraws himself completely from worldly activities, and occupies himself entirely with meditation and the remembrance of God.

Sufis refer to the various stages on the mystical path as stations *(maqāmāt*, sg. *maqām)* and mystical states as *(aḥwāl*, sg. *ḥāl)*. Hujwīrī explains the difference between a station *(maqām)* and state *(ḥāl)*:

> 'Station *(maqām)*' denotes anyone's standing in the way of God, and his fulfilment of the obligations appertaining to that station, and his keeping it until he comprehends its perfection so far as lies in a man's power. It is not permissible that he should quit his station without fulfilling the obligations thereof. Thus, the first station is repentance *(tawbat)*, then comes conversion *(inābat)*, then renunciation *(zuhd)*, then trust *(tawakkul)* in God, and so on. It is not permissible that anyone should pretend to conversion without repentance, or to renunciation without conversion, or to trust in God without renunciation.
>
> 'State *(ḥāl)*', on the other hand, is something that descends from God into a man's heart, without his being able to repel it when it comes, or to attract it when it goes, by his own effort. Accordingly, while the term 'station' denotes the way of the seeker, and his progress in the field of exertion, and his rank before God in proportion to his merit, the term 'state' denotes the favour and grace which God bestows upon the heart of His servant, and which are not connected with any mortification on the latter's part. 'Station' belongs to the category of acts, 'state' to the category of gifts.
>
> *Hujwīrī, Kashf al-Maḥjūb XIV:1, KM p.181*

The stations constitute the spiritual discipline of the Sufi, and can be reached and mastered by his own effort. The states are spiritual feelings and experiences over which he has no control since they descend from God into his heart. Only after the Sufi has traversed all the stations and experienced whatever states God bestows upon him is he permanently raised to higher states of consciousness that the Sufis call the *gnosis (ma'rifah)* and the Truth *(Ḥaqīqah)*. Then the seeker becomes the knower or gnostic *('ārif)*, and realizes that knowledge, knower and known are one.[167]

The number and the definition of states and stations vary from one Sufi Master to another. Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj (*d.*988 CE), in his book *The Book of Flashes (Kitāb al-Luma')*, regarded as the first systematic exposition of Sufism as a way of life and thought, identifies seven stations, namely: repentance *(tawbat)*, watchfulness *(wara')*, renunciation *(zuhd)*, poverty *(faqr)*, patience *(ṣabr)*, trust *(tawakkul)* and acceptance *(riḍā')*.

The widely varying lists and descriptions of the stations of the path and the occasional overlap between states and stations is probably because each list of spiritual stations was to some extent a reflection of the individual experience and bent of mind of its author. The presentation of such a list would also be tailored to the nature of the particular audience that the Sufi Master was addressing. Sometimes, different Sufis give apparently contradictory definitions of the

same station. Such variations may be only seeming, however, since there can be many different ways of expressing the same thing. Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj writes:

> When al-Sūsī was asked about repentance, he replied: "Repentance is the return from everything that knowledge condemns toward what knowledge praises." When Sahl ibn 'Abd al-Allāh was asked about repentance, he responded, "It is to never forget your fault." When Junayd was asked about repentance, he said, "It is forgetting your fault."
>
> The *Shaykh* (God grant him compassion) said: "The response of al-Sūsī (God grant him compassion) concerning repentance was in reference to the repentance of the novice, the venturers, the seekers, the questers, those who are sometimes in the right and sometimes in the wrong. The same is the case for what Sahl ibn 'Abd al-Allāh al-Tustarī (God grant him compassion) said. However, the response of Junayd (God grant him compassion) – that repentance is forgetting your fault – concerns the repentance of those who have achieved realization. They do not remember their faults; their hearts are overwhelmed with God's majesty and with his continual remembrance."
>
> *Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj, Book of Flashes, in EIM p.199*

The Sufi lives with an ever increasing awareness of God. One aspect of this awareness is the practice of *dhikr,* which means remembrance, specifically of God, a practice that can also include *tawajjuh* (contemplation) upon the *Murshid. Dhikr* is usually done by pronouncing God's name or by uttering a recognized verbal formula, always as prescribed by the *Murshid.* This repetition of the name of God is to be done whenever the mind is free, but takes on its most significant role in meditation. The actual practice of *dhikr* varies from one *Murshid* or school to another. Some repeat it out loud, some silently in the mind, some in groups, and some individually in seclusion. Al-Ghazālī describes it as follows:

> Let him reduce his heart to a state in which the existence of anything and its nonexistence are the same to him. Then let him sit alone in some corner, limiting his religious duties to what are absolutely necessary, and not occupying himself either with reciting the *Qur'ān* or considering its meaning or with books of religious traditions or with anything of the sort. And let him see to it that nothing save God Most High enters his mind. Then, as he sits in solitude, let him not cease saying continuously with his tongue, *"Allāh, Allāh",* keeping his thought on it. At last he will reach a state when the motion of his tongue will cease, and it will seem as though the word flowed from it. Let him persevere in this until all trace of motion is removed from his tongue, and he finds his heart persevering in the thought. Let him still persevere until the form of the word, its letters and shape, is removed from his heart, and there remains the idea alone, as though clinging to his heart, inseparable from it.

So far, all is dependent on his will and choice; ... but to bring down the mercy of God is not available to his will or choice. He has now laid himself bare to the breathings of that mercy, and nothing now remains but to await what God will open to him, as God has done after this manner to prophets and Saints. If he follows the above course, he may be sure that the light of the Real will shine out in his heart. At first unstable, like a flash of lightning, it turns and returns; though sometimes it hangs back. And if it returns, sometimes it abides and sometimes it is momentary. And if it abides, sometimes its abiding is long, and sometimes short.

Al-Ghazālī (paraphrased); cf. in RAL pp.255–56

Thus, an individual's striving towards God is in his own hands, but the fruits are experienced entirely as a blessing of the Divine. The *Qur'ān* mentions remembrance on a number of occasions:

O ye who believe! Remember *(adhkurū) Allāh*
with much remembrance *(dhikr).*

Qur'ān 33:41, MGK

Therefore remember me *(adhkurūni),*
I will remember you *(adhkurkum).*
Give thanks to me, and reject me not.

Qur'ān 2:152, MGK

Like all mystics, a Sufi's knowledge is essentially experiential. His real learning comes through direct experience, not by reading or study. Without that experience, it can be difficult to grasp the true import of a Sufi's sayings or writings. Moreover, his meaning can only be truly understood when the full context is known. It can be useful to realize this, because the tendency of the reader and seeker after truth is to try to understand a certain statement without knowledge of its context, or of the inner state of the Master at the time of the utterance, or of the person or people to whom it was addressed. It should also be remembered that Sufi Masters are not all at the same spiritual level.

Sufis quote copiously from the *Qur'ān* and the *Ḥadīth;* some quotations, being more relevant to their purposes than others, are more commonly used:

It was We who created man,
and We know what suggestions his soul makes to him:
For We are nearer *(naḥnu aqrabu)* to him
than his jugular vein *(ḥabl al-warīd).*

Qur'ān 50:16, HQSA

To *Allāh* belong the East and the West;
Whithersoever ye turn:
there is *Allāh*'s countenance.
For *Allāh* is all-embracing, all-knowing.

Qur'ān 2:115, AYA

Whoever knows oneself, knows one's Lord.

Ḥadīth, AMBF 529, in MDI p.189

Who has seen me, has seen *Allāh*.

Ḥadīth, AMBF 163, in MDI p.223

Allāh says: "One who advances towards me by a hand's breadth, I advance towards him by an arm's length, and he who advances towards me an arm's length, I advance towards him by two arms' length. If a servant of mine comes to me walking, I go to him running."

Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 9:93.502, in RSN (440) p.265

Whoever is inimical to one whom I befriend, is at war with me. When a servant of mine approaches me through the medium of that which I like best, out of what I have declared obligatory for him, and continues to advance towards me through optional prayers *(nawāfil)*, then I begin to love him. When I make him my beloved, I become his ears to hear, and his eyes to see, and his hands to grasp, and his feet to walk. When he asks me, I grant him, and when he seeks my protection I protect him.

Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 8:76.509, in RSN (95) p.74

Since Sufis have adopted Islam as the foundation of their teachings, the disciple is generally expected to follow Islamic religious law *(sharī'ah)*, that is, to mould his life according to the teachings of the *Qur'ān* and the *Ḥadīth*. The next step is to follow the way or "path", the method prescribed by the Sufi Master or *Shaykh*. The last step, which is also the ultimate goal, is to experience and have first-hand knowledge of the Truth, God. This is no simple matter, and only a few reach the goal while still living in this world. But once the goal is reached, then the outer aspects of the religion are understood to be irrelevant. As Rūmī writes:

Unless you gain possession of the candle, there is no wayfaring; and when you have come on to the way, your wayfaring is the path; and when you have reached the journey's end, that is the Truth. Hence, it has been said, "If the (spiritual) truths (realities) were manifest, the religious laws would be naught." As when copper becomes gold or was gold originally, it does not need the alchemy which is the law, nor need it rub itself upon the philosopher's stone, which operation is the path; for, as has been said, it is

unseemly to demand a guide after arrival at the goal, and blameworthy to discard the guide before arrival at the goal.

Or the law may be compared to learning the science of medicine, and the path to regulating one's diet in accordance with the science of medicine and taking remedies, and the Truth to gaining health everlasting and becoming independent of them both. When a man dies to this present life, the law and the path fall away from him, and there remains only the Truth.

Rūmī, Maśnavī V, Preface; cf. MJR6 p.3

The Sufis

Most Sufis who have passed through the experience of *fanā'-fī Allāh* (extinction or annihilation in God), leading them to the state of *baqā' billāh* (eternal life or subsistence in God), have preferred to live eternally in the greatest depths of silence. "For when you have attained 'fixity', you are dumb."[168] But some have produced literary, poetic and musical works of unsurpassed glory. Those are the Sufi Masters whose responsibility it is to teach and guide others on the Sufi path to God-realization.

Sufis make a distinction between a prophet and a Saint in that the prophet comes with a mission and a scripture for his nation and for all mankind, while a Saint guides and teaches only his own disciples, who may be few or many. There have been a great many Sufi Masters, of varying spiritual degrees, some being better known than others because of the literary works that survived them. Among those better known to English readers are:

Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (*d.*728)
Ja'far al-Ṣādīq (*c.*702–765)
Rābi'ah al-'Adawīyah (*c.*717–801)
Al-Muḥāsibī (*d.*857)
Al-Bisṭāmī (*d.c.*875)
Sahl al-Tustarī (818–896)
Al-Junayd (*d.*910)
Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj (*c.*857–922)
Niffārī (*d.*965)
Al-Sarrāj (*d.*988)
Al-Qushayrī (986–1074)
Ḥażrat 'Ināyat Khān (1882–1927)
Al-Ghazālī (1058–1111)
Ḥakīm Sanā'ī (*d.c.*1131)
Rūzbihān Baqlī (1128–1209)
Farīd al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār (*c.*1142–1220)
Mu'īn al-Dīn Chishtī (*c.*1143–1236)
Ibn 'Arabī (1165–1240)
Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (1207–1273)
Sa'dī (*c.*1213–1292)
Ḥāfiẓ (*c.*1326–1390)
Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshbandī (1318–1389)
Jāmī (1414–1492)

Some Sufi Masters produced many works of poetry and storytelling whose aim is to awaken the slumbering souls of this world, and to guide them on the path of enlightenment. Some of these works are regarded as unparalleled masterpieces, even by literary critics; others can be regarded as Sufi manuals of practice and discipline explaining the way, step by step. Well-known examples are Rūmī's *Maśnavī* (a *maśnavī* is any poem in rhymed distichs), 'Aṭṭār's *Manṭiq*

al-Ṭayr (The Conference of the Birds), al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn (Revival of the Religious Sciences),* Ibn 'Arabī's *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyah (The Meccan Revelations),* Hujwīrī's *Kashf al-Maḥjūb (The Unveiling of the Veiled),* and many other works, too numerous to mention.

Unlike worldly authors and poets, for many of whom fame, money and prestige are significant motivations, true Sufi Masters write or compose with one purpose in mind: to convey a spiritual message. In most cases, their sayings and teachings were either taken down by their disciples from the Master's oral recitation or dictation, or they were written down by their followers from memory. Thus Rūmī writes, almost extraordinarily:

> I am loving to such an extent that when friends come to see me, for fear that they should grow weary, I speak poetry to entertain them. Otherwise, what have I to do with poetry? By *Allāh,* I care nothing for poetry. I can't think of anything worse.
>
> *Rūmī, Fīhi mā Fīhi 16:7–10, KFF p.74; cf. DRA p.85, SOU p.77*

Yet Rūmī's *Maśnavī* consists of more that 25,000 couplets, in six books, and his *Dīvān* almost 45,000 verses. Both works were written down in Persian by Rūmī's disciples from oral recitation. With the exception of the *Qur'ān,* no other book in Islam has been so venerated and revered as Rūmī's *Maśnavī,* referred to as the "*Qur'ān* in the Persian tongue".

Out of almost 850 works of Ibn 'Arabī, his *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyah,* an opus of 17,000 pages in Arabic, is by far the largest and most well known. In it, he says:

> I have recorded these inspirations in accordance with the command of my Lord that I received. I do not speak about anything except by way of (reporting) what I have heard (from God) – just as I will stop (writing) whenever I am directed to do so. For our compositions – this book and all the others – are not like other books; we do not follow the procedure of ordinary writers ... (who follow their own aims and desires, or what is required by a knowledge they want to communicate, at their own discretion). No, we are not like that in our writings. They are only hearts intent upon the door of the divine Presence, carefully attending to what is opened up to them through that door, needy *(faqīra)* and empty of all knowledge (of their own)....
>
> So sometimes there appears to them from behind that Curtain a particular matter that they hasten to obey in the way that was defined for them in that Command. And sometimes they receive things that are unlike anything ordinarily found by custom or thinking or reflection in outward knowledge ... because of a hidden correspondence that is only perceived by the people of spiritual unveiling. Indeed sometimes it is even stranger than that:

> for things are given to this heart that it is ordered to communicate, although the person doesn't understand them at this time, because of a divine Wisdom which is hidden from the people. Therefore, every person who composes according to this 'receiving' from God is not restricted to understanding that about which they are speaking.
>
> *Ibn 'Arabī, Meccan Revelations 1:264–65, in LGP p.27*

Although most Sufis have espoused Islam as the foundation of their teachings, the Muslim orthodoxy has often rejected them. While Sufis were loved and admired by the Muslim masses and by some rulers, they were often despised by orthodox Muslims who adhered to the literal meanings of the *Qur'ān* and *Ḥadīth*, and so considered Sufi interpretations as evidence of infidelity and heresy. Rūmī would not have endeared himself to them when he said:

> God's treasuries are many, and God's knowledge is vast. If a man reads one *Qur'ān* with understanding, why should he reject any other *Qur'ān?*
>
> I once said to a teacher of the *Qur'ān*, "The *Qur'ān* says: 'Say, if the sea were ink to write the words of my Lord, verily the sea would fail, before the words of my Lord would fail.'[169]
>
> "Now for fifty drams of ink one can transcribe the whole *Qur'ān*. This *(Qur'ān)* is but a symbol of God's knowledge; it is not the whole of His knowledge. If an apothecary puts a pinch of medicine in a piece of paper, would you say that the whole of the drugstore is in this paper? That would be foolishness. After all, in the time of Moses, Jesus and the other prophets, the *Qur'ān* existed; that is, God's Word existed; it simply wasn't in Arabic."
>
> This is how I explained the matter; but when I saw that it made no impression upon that teacher of the *Qur'ān*, I let him go.
>
> *Rūmī, Fīhi mā Fīhi 18:7–14, KFF p.81; cf. DRA pp.93–94, SOU pp.85–86*

Many Sufis suffered ostracism, ridicule, physical torture, and even execution. Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj was put to death on the gibbet after his limbs had been amputated the night before, as a public punishment for his ecstatic utterance in public, "*Anā al-Ḥaqq* (I am the Truth)."

Orthodox Muslims consider Islam to be the only valid religion leading to salvation, and the Prophet Muḥammad the only prophet who can intercede before God for all humanity. Likewise, the *Qur'ān* is regarded as the only true scripture – dictated by God Himself to his Prophet through the angel Gabriel. So the orthodox were not amused, but rather offended and shocked, when Sanā'ī said:

> At His door, what is the difference
> between Muslim and Christian, virtuous and guilty?

At His door, all are seekers,
and He the sought.

Sanā'ī, Walled Garden of Truth 28:12–13, WGT p.19; cf. HHG p.44

This refrain has been repeated by many Sufis, finding expression in a poem attributed to Rūmī and addressed to his Master, Shams-i Tabrīz, though modern opinion reckons the authorship to be spurious. For the Sufi poet, whoever he was, there is only one humanity, one Reality and one God:

What is to be done, O Muslims?
For I do not recognize myself.
I am neither Christian, nor Jew,
nor *Gabr* (Zoroastrian), nor Muslim.
I am not of the East, nor of the West,
nor of the land, nor of the sea;
I am not of nature's mint, nor of the circling heavens.
I am not of earth, nor of water, nor of air, nor of fire;
I am not of the empyrean, nor of the dust,
nor of existence, nor of entity.
I am not of India, nor of China,
nor of Bulgaria, nor of Saqsīn;
I am not of the kingdom of 'Irāqayn,
not of the country of Khurāsān.
I am not of this world, nor of the next,
nor of paradise, nor of hell;
I am not of Adam, nor of Eve, nor of Eden and Riżvān.

My place is the Placeless, my trace is the Traceless;
'Tis neither body nor soul,
for I belong to the soul of the Beloved.
I have put duality away,
I have seen that the two worlds are one;
One I seek, One I know, One I see, One I call.
He is the first, He is the last,
He is the outward, He is the inward;
I know none other except *'Yā Hū'* and *'Yā man Hū'*.
I am intoxicated with love's cup,
the two worlds have passed out of my ken;
I have no business save carouse and revelry.
If once in my life I spent a moment without thee,
from that time and from that hour I repent of my life.
If once in this world I win a moment with thee,
I will trample on both worlds,

I will dance in triumph forever.
O Shams-i Tabrīz, I am so drunken in this world,
that except of drunkenness and revelry
I have no tale to tell.

Rūmī, Dīvān-i Shams-i Tabrīz, KST p.460, SDST (XXXI) pp.124–27

Ibn 'Arabī, too, can hardly have endeared himself to the traditionalists when he declared that his only religion was love, and that his "heart" contained the essence of the *Qur'ān*, the Jewish *Torah*, pagan temples, Christian monasteries and the *Ka'bah*:

My heart has become capable of every form:
It is a pasture for gazelles and a convent for Christian monks,
and a temple for idols and the pilgrim's *Ka'bah*,
and the tables of the *Torah* and the book of the *Qur'ān*.
I follow the religion of love:
Whatever way love's camels take,
that is my religion and my faith.

Ibn 'Arabī, Tarjumān al-Ashwāq XI, TAA pp.19, 67

In a similar vein, al-Ghazālī records that Rābi'ah also said that her love of God outweighed all other loves, even that of the Prophet:

Somebody asked Rābi'ah: "How much do you love the Apostle of God (Muḥammad)?" She replied: "Verily I love him greatly, but the love of the Creator has turned me aside from all love of His creatures."

Rābi'ah, in Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn 4, IDC p.308; cf. RRS p.316, RM p.99, TAI p.80

The common thread running through the writings of these and many other Sufis is that after reaching the Truth, religions or the roads taken to reach it become irrelevant. The only thing that counts is love. Like so many other mystics before and since, the Sufis said that God is love and love is God.

Not all Sufis, however, have been regarded as outside the orthodox fold. Al-Ghazālī and Ibn 'Arabī, for example, are both credited with having reconciled the Sufis with the Muslim orthodoxy to a great extent. Their many works showed their unchallenged knowledge of Islamic exegesis, their adherence to the Islamic laws and traditions, and their veneration of the Prophet, earning them the respect of both the Muslim masses and the intelligentsia. Al-Ghazālī was accepted as an orthodox authority, earning the title of *Ḥujjat al-Islām* (the Proof of Islam), while Ibn 'Arabī was called *al-Shaykh al-Akbar* (the Great *Shaykh*). But this did not prevent attacks against them and Sufism from the orthodoxy, which continue even to the present day:

> Nobody accompanied the *Ṣūfīs* forty days and had his brain return (never).
>
> *Imām Shāfi'ī, in Talbīs Iblīs*

And:

> Sufism is a shameful deception which begins with *dhikr* (remembrance) and ends with *kufr* (heresy). Its outward manifestation appears to be piety, but its inward reality forsakes the commandments of *Allāh*.
>
> *Shaykh Abū Bakr al-Jazā'irī, in 'Illat-i Taṣawwuf yā 'Ibādallāh*

Sufism, like all true spirituality, challenges the individual to face his own strengths and weaknesses, rather than criticizing others, and to question his religious beliefs with a searching intelligence and discrimination. Sufis have based their teachings on Islam because they and their audience were mostly Muslims. Islam was their religious framework, their spiritual starting point. Hence, Rūmī mentions the *Qur'ān* and Muḥammad, in one way or another, on almost every page of his *Maśnavī*. Similarly, Ibn 'Arabī's *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyah (The Meccan Revelations)* is entirely devoted to the explanation and interpretation of the *Qur'ān* and the *Ḥadīth*.

Like any other science, Sufism has its own terminology, familiarity with which is essential for the reader of Sufi literature. Included in this terminology are a great many frequently occurring symbols, images, metaphors and even codes, all with tacitly understood esoteric meanings. This symbolic language allowed Sufi writers to convey their meaning to the initiated, while hiding it from others, permitting them to escape persecution from the orthodox authorities.

Even the letters of the Arabic alphabet were given specific meanings, Arabic being the language of God's inspired book, the *Qur'ān*. Hence *alif,* the letter A, the first letter in the Arabic alphabet, is used to denote *Allāh,* who comes before all things. The *alif* is written with a single vertical stroke, like the Arabic number one, and Sufis also use it to indicate that *Allāh* is not only the beginning, but that He is single, beyond all duality. However, the subject of letter symbolism is very difficult to understand even for Sufi scholars, especially since the meaning of some letters shifts from one writer or poet to another.

Probably the most commonly misunderstood Sufi images are those of the Beloved and the Cupbearer, of wine, taverns and drunkenness. Many scholars have taken such poetry to convey wanton sensuality and recklessness. Yet Sufis have consistently pointed out that in their imagery the Beloved is God or the *Shaykh;* the tavern is the inner sanctum where the divine Beloved is met; the *Sāqī* (the Cupbearer) is again the *Shaykh,* as, too, is the tavern keeper; wine is the divine love with which the soul becomes drunken or intoxicated, losing all sense of self in an ecstasy of bliss; the beauty of the Beloved is the divine perfection, while the features of his face – moles, locks of hair, eyebrows, lips and more – all represent aspects of the relationship of the intoxicated soul with

the divine Beloved. To understand Sufi literature, therefore, it is necessary to realize that there is meaning behind the meaning, veils behind the veils.

But, in the end, books are only maps, and the company of an experienced guide is far better than any map when the intention is to reach the destination. Books and words are only meant to whet the appetite of the seeker, and to encourage him to travel on the inner road. Hence, Rūmī points out that the Truth, God, is within:

> There is a life within your life:
> seek that life.
> In the mountain of your body lies a gem:
> seek that treasure.
> O wandering *Ṣūfī*, if you are seeking that life,
> look not outside:
> Seek that life within yourself.
>
> *Rūmī, Dīvān-i Shams-i Tabrīz, Rubā'īyāt 32, KSD8 p.6, KDS2 (45) p.1269*

1.11 Indian Traditions

The Vedas and Upanishads

The earliest extant Indian sacred texts are the four *Vedas* (*lit.* knowledge) – the *Ṛig*, the *Sāma*, the *Yajur* and the *Atharva* – and modern knowledge of Indian religion and mysticism starts at this point. The little that is known of pre-Vedic religion is fragmentary, gleaned largely from archaeological discoveries in the Indus valley and some other places.

To the highly orthodox, the *Vedas* are not only the texts themselves, but also the divine Truth itself of which the texts are regarded as a reflection. In this sense, the *Vedas* are understood to be eternal. They are regarded as *apaurusheya* (superhuman, impersonal), without defect, owing their origin to no person – human or divine. God is understood to have created the entire universe through the pre-existent knowledge of the *Vedas*. Their authority does not depend on anything external; they themselves are their own authority. Their truth is said to be verifiable by a spiritual aspirant in transcendent consciousness. Vedic literature, which includes the *Upanishads*, is thus regarded as revelation or *shruti*, meaning something that is 'heard'.

The origins of the *Vedas* are encompassed by myth. According to the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad*, they were "breathed forth" from the infinite Reality *(Brahman)*.[170] The *Purusha Sūkta* of the *Ṛig Veda* says that they were the result of a sacrificial rite performed by the gods while meditating on the eternal Being.[171] Another legend relates that they were uttered by the creator-deity, *Brahmā*, while he was meditating on the supreme Creator, and he then taught them to his disciples, the *ṛishis* Marīchi, Atri, Angiras and so on. But *Brahmā*

was only a vehicle: the *Vedas* had existed from before the creation of the universe.

When the *Vedas* were composed is a matter of debate, but from the language, it seems clear that they were written over a period of time, the earliest, the *Ṛig Veda,* usually being dated around 1500 BCE. At the heart of each *Veda* is a collection of hymns and verses *(Saṃhitā)* addressed to various deities, for use during sacrificial ceremonies and on other occasions. The hymns and their associated deities and rituals are usually understood to reflect a fusion of the religious beliefs of the early, indigenous people with the beliefs of those who spread into India, probably from the Middle East, during the second millennium BCE. The texts were transmitted by an oral tradition, certain families being entrusted with the preservation of particular portions of the text, some of these sections still bearing the names of the families concerned.

Vedic rituals are essentially sacrificial offerings made to one or more deities, performed by a priest according to specific formulae, with particular benefits in mind. Many of these deities are associated with natural forces. Thus, major Vedic deities include *Indra* (god of the air and sky, of rain, storm and thunder), *Varuṇa* (god of cosmic order and moral law) and *Agni* (god of fire). Although these gods are sometimes addressed as though they were the supreme Creator, few early Vedic hymns express a definitive belief in one supreme God. In fact, the characteristics and popularity of the individual deities changed with the passage of time. Thus, the three major deities of later Hinduism *(Brahmā, Vishṇu* and *Shiva)* are only minor deities in early Vedic times, while *Indra,* at one time regarded as the lord of all the gods, loses his prominence in later periods. Even so, Vedic hymns do exhibit a marked spectrum of polytheistic, monotheistic and monistic points of view, though it is a matter of debate whether this represents an evolution of religious thought, an attempt to cater to the needs of people at varying levels of spiritual attainment, or simply an expression of the beliefs of individual writers.

Some Vedic hymns are clearly allegorical. A few thinkers, however, have gone further, suggesting that the Vedas are replete with hints of secret doctrines and mystic truths. Shrī Aurobindo, for example, regards the gods of the Vedic hymns as symbols of psychological faculties: *Sūrya,* for instance, signifies intelligence, *Agni* will, and *Soma* feeling. He writes:

> The hypothesis I propose is that the *Ṛig Veda* itself is the one considerable document that remains to us from the early period of thought of which the Eleusinian and Orphic mysteries were the failing remnants, when the spiritual and psychological knowledge of the race was concealed, for reasons now difficult to determine, in a veil of concrete and material figures and symbols, which protected the sense from the profane and revealed it to the initiated. One of the leading principles of the mystics was the sacredness and secrecy of self-knowledge and the true knowledge of the gods. This

> wisdom was, they thought, unfit for – perhaps even dangerous to – the ordinary human mind, or in any case liable to perversion and misuse and loss of virtue, if revealed to vulgar and unpurified spirits. Hence, they favoured the existence of an outer worship, effective but imperfect, for the profane, and an inner discipline for the initiate, and clothed their language in words and images which had equally a spiritual sense for the elect and a concrete sense for the mass of ordinary worshippers. The Vedic hymns were conceived and constructed on these principles.
>
> *Shrī Aurobindo, Ārya 1, AAP p.60; in IP1 pp.69–70*

Others have also expressed the view that the original and hidden meaning of the text has been lost, and have sought to rediscover it. Such ideas have been considered ingenious but have found no general acceptance, possibly because they have not been fully worked out or demonstrated as correct. But perhaps the last word has not yet been said upon the subject, and there may be more to such ideas than mere ingenuity.

With the passage of time, other literature has become associated with the four *Vedas*, becoming accepted as a part of the *Vedas* themselves. Thus, each of the four *Vedas* came to be comprised of four parts – the *Saṃhitā* (original hymns), the *Brāhmaṇas* (priestly manuals, largely as explanations of the significance of the rituals), the *Āraṇyakas* (magical or symbolic interpretations of the rituals), and the *Upanishads* (*lit.* a sitting down near).

Although the Vedic hymns contain some inspiring and deeply mystical passages, it is the *Upanishads* that express the essence of traditional Indian mysticism and philosophy. Probably dating from around 900 to 600 BCE, their primary concern is the nature of Reality *(Brahman)*, and how to realize the oneness of the soul *(ātman)* with that *Brahman* by means of meditation. There are, in all, over a hundred *Upanishads*, of varying lengths, including a number of later texts which have also been accepted as *Upanishads*. They are comprised of direct teaching, allegories and stories designed to convey mystical teaching. Caroline Spurgeon summarizes the teaching of the *Upanishads* from a Western perspective:

> The mysterious 'secret' taught by the *Upanishads* is that the soul or spiritual consciousness is the only source of true knowledge. The Hindu calls the soul the 'seer' or the 'knower', and thinks of it as a great eye in the centre of his being, which, if he concentrates his attention upon it, is able to look outwards and gaze upon Reality. The soul is capable of this because, in essence, it is one with *Brahman*, the universal Soul. The apparent separation is an illusion wrought by matter. Hence, to the Hindu, matter is an obstruction and a deception, and the Eastern mystic despises and rejects and subdues all that is material, and bends all the faculties on realizing spiritual consciousness, and dwelling in that.
>
> *C.F.E. Spurgeon, Mysticism in English Literature, MEL p.15*

The teaching of the *Upanishads* is sometimes said to be summarized in four *mahāvākyas* (great utterances). Various contenders have been suggested for these four, one usually being taken from each of the four *Vedas*. Each of these sayings expresses the same mystical truth in a different way. For example:

1. *Prajñānaṃ Brahma:* "Consciousness is *Brahman*" (*Ṛig Veda, Aitareya Upanishad* 3:1.3).

2. *Tat tvam asi:* "Thou art that" (*Sāma Veda, Chhāndogya Upanishad* 6:8.7).

3. *Ayam ātmā Brahma:* "This self is *Brahman*" (*Atharva Veda, Māṇḍūkya Upanishad* 1:2; also in *Yajur Veda, Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad* 2:5.19).

4. *Ahaṃ Brahmāsmi:* "I am *Brahman*" (*Yajur Veda, Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad* 1:4.10).

The Six Schools

Since the *Upanishads* comprise the last of the texts added to the *Vedas*, they have also become known as *Vedānta (lit.* the end of the *Vedas)*. Likewise, the essence of their philosophy, as understood by Indian philosophers, is known as *Vedānta. Vedānta* can mean either the end of the *Vedas* in a mundane sense, or the goal or object of the *Vedas*, implying the realization of *Brahman*. In modern India, Vedic sacrifice has been largely supplanted by different rites, while the Vedic belief that actions on earth are closely related to events in the heavens has been superseded by the Upanishadic doctrine of *karma*, transmigration and the liberation of the soul through the mystical realization of *Brahman*.

It is commonly said that there are six main schools or systems *(shaḍ darshanas)* of orthodox *(astika)* Indian philosophy, each having this same essential, mystical goal. The use of the word *darshanas* (seeing, insight, vision) highlights the essential difference between the perspectives of Eastern and Western philosophy. In the West, philosophy is largely based upon discursive thinking and logical reasoning, that is, on the logical consideration of concepts. In the East, philosophy stems from a direct experience or vision (hence *darshanas*) of Reality; its purpose is to explain and interpret that vision as an inducement to the true goal of philosophy: the actual experience of Reality. The six orthodox *darshanas* are:

1. *Nyāya* (the logical school).
2. *Vaisheshika* (the atomic school).
3. *Sānkhya* (the dualist school).
4. *Yoga* or *Pātañjala* (the practical school).
5. *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā* (*lit.* the earlier inquiry) or *Mīmāṃsā*.
6. *Uttara Mīmāṃsā* (*lit.* the last inquiry) or *Vedānta*.

These six are contrasted with the six heterodox *(nastika)* systems:

1. *Chārvāka darshana* (Indian materialism).
2. Jainism.
3–6. The four schools of Buddhism – *Vaibhāshika, Sautrāntika, Yogāchāra* and *Mādhyamika.*

The six orthodox systems are regarded as such, because, unlike Jainism and Buddhism, they accept the authority of the *Vedas* and, although they expand on the original revelations, they are generally regarded as doing so without crossing the limits of orthodoxy.

Because of certain metaphysical similarities, the six systems, although independent in origin, are generally reduced to three pairs: *Nyāya* and *Vaisheshika, Sānkhya* and *Yoga,* and *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā* and *Uttara Mīmāṃsā,* also called *Vedānta.* The first pair, in particular, are treated together.

As these systems are drawn from a common reservoir of thought – the *Vedas* and *Upanishads* – they use a common philosophical language, adapting it for their own particular doctrines. Hence, terms such as *ātman* (self or soul), *avidyā* (ignorance), *māyā* (illusion), *purusha* (being, spirit) and *jīva* (a living or embodied soul) are common to the different systems, although the specific meanings assigned to them are not always identical.

Questions concerning the nature of knowledge and how to acquire it form an important part of each system. Each system has its own theory of knowledge. While the systems accept the *Vedas,* reason is subordinated to intuition, and the schools are basically concerned with the spirit, which is above mere logic. All six schools teach the law of *karma,* the pre-existence of the soul and reincarnation; and, except perhaps *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā,* they have the practical aim of *moksha* (liberation). Ignorance *(avidyā)* is regarded as the cause of bondage, and release can only be had through knowledge of Reality. All of them are concerned with the nature of the true Self, the direct experience of which imparts freedom. All systems consider cleansing of the heart, unselfishness, love, and disinterested action as necessary for obtaining *moksha.*

Each of the six systems is generally associated with one of the ancient sages or *ṛishis,* to whom are attributed a collection of *sūtras* (*lit.* threads, brief aphorisms) outlining the particular system. The systems themselves, however, predate the *ṛishis* with whom they have become associated.

1. Nyāya

The *Nyāya* school of Ṛishi Gautama, sometimes called the 'logical school', teaches the proper method of arriving at a conclusion by logical analysis. It teaches that God is one and souls are numerous; that *Brahman* is the primary or root cause of the creation, and that *prakṛiti* (cosmic or primal nature, the subtle blueprint of all material forms) is the material or contributory cause. This school

is essentially one of intellect and analysis, rather than direct mystic experience, though the central subject of discussion is the nature of Reality.

There are two schools in the *Nyāya* system: the ancient school *(Prāchīna Nyāya)* and the modern school *(Navya Nyāya)*. The former is mostly concerned with an analysis of the nature of knowledge such as the sources of knowledge *(pramāṇa)*, the objects of knowledge *(prameya)*, and so on. The latter lays almost exclusive emphasis on the logical aspects of *nyāya*, developing it into a formal logic of relationships between concepts, terms and propositions.

2. Vaisheshika

The logical approach of the *Vaisheshika* school of Ṛishi Kaṇāda is very similar to that of *Nyāya*. *Vaisheshika* is called the atomic school because it teaches the existence of a transient world composed of aggregations of eternal atoms. The external world is said to be independent of the mind. The self, regarded as a kind of spiritual entity, is eternal and omnipresent, devoid of attributes, and even consciousness does not belong to it in its liberated state.

3. Sānkhya

The *Sānkhya* school of Ṛishi Kapila (*c.*C6th BCE, and certainly pre-Buddhist) is dualistic, propounding the existence of two separate realities: *purusha* (cosmic spirit, soul) and *prakṛiti* (cosmic substance, nature). Within *prakṛiti* is contained, as a seed contains the tree, the essence of all creation. Within *prakṛiti* are the three *guṇas*, the fundamental characteristics of all diversity, in a state of rest. However, the close proximity of *purusha* stimulates *prakṛiti* into activity, and the multiplicity of creation then comes into being through the outward evolution of *prakṛiti*. First to come into existence is the *mahat* (cosmic intelligence), which pervades all space and permeates all things. Following this, arise *ahankāra* (self-consciousness), *manas* (cosmic mind), the five *jñānendriyas* (organs of sense perception), the five *karmendriyas* (organs of action), the five *tanmātras* (subtle essences), and the five *mahābhūtas* (gross elements). Together with *purusha* and *prakṛiti*, these primordial elements of existence, known as *tattvas* (essential essences), number twenty-five.

According to the *Sānkhya* school, suffering is caused by the misidentification of spirit *(purusha)* with substance *(prakṛiti)*, and the supreme goal of life is to find an end to this misery by removing the ignorance of the essential distinction between the two. This leads automatically to liberation of the soul. The means by which this is accomplished is *yoga*, which is why *Sānkhya* and *yoga* are commonly linked in discussions of the six *darshanas*.

According to some, *Sānkhya* is atheistic, and does not admit God as the creator and controller of the universe. Both *purusha* and *prakṛiti* are primordially existent; there has been no creation, and nothing essentially new is ever created. Everything has evolved out of the original substance, *prakṛiti*, and will eventually

return to it. Others believe that prior to classical atheistic *Sānkhya,* there was a preclassical theistic *Sānkhya.*

4. Yoga

It is *yoga,* the fourth system of Indian philosophy, which is known to the popular mind, both East and West, as the essential mysticism of India. *Yoga* is the practice by which the assertions of philosophy can be verified or turned into experience. In the context of the six systems, *yoga* refers more specifically to *ashṭānga yoga,* later called *rāja yoga,* the system of *yoga* attributed to the second-century BCE yogi, Patañjali, as outlined in his *Yoga Sūtras.* By means of *yoga,* mental waves of thought are controlled. By observing certain ethical and spiritual disciplines, notably concentration and meditation, *samādhi* or transcendental consciousness is attained.

In practice, *yoga* refers to any of a number of practical disciplines having the same goal. By means of *yoga,* understanding is gained of the true self and its relationship to Reality *(Brahman),* leading ultimately to union of the soul with its divine Source, and freedom from the cycle of birth and death. Incidental goals or attainments of *yoga* include physical and mental well-being, balance and vigour, self-awareness, freedom from ill health, long life, knowledge of death, knowledge of the past and future, mystic or higher perception of the hows and whys of creation, both on individual and cosmic scales, and – through concentration of the mind – the attainment of miraculous powers *(ṛiddhis* and *siddhis).*

Demonstrating the vitality imparted to a philosophy by personal experience, many schools of practical *yoga* have come into being over the last two and a half millennia, and many yogic texts have been written. More or less contemporary with Patañjali, the *Bhagavad Gītā* speaks of *yoga,* as do many later texts like the *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā,* the *Shiva Saṃhitā,* the *Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā,* and others. This interest continues into the present era, as evidenced by the abundance of books on all forms of *yoga,* in both the East and West.

Whatever the school, *yoga* is always an essentially practical path. It is something to be followed and practised. It is comprised of certain exercises, varying according to the form of *yoga,* carried out within the framework of an upright, moral and ordered way of life. Some of the exercises may be physical, but the ultimate aim is always to develop the mental and spiritual forms of exercise. In addition to *ashṭānga yoga,* well-known schools of *yoga* include:

Jñāna yoga (the *yoga* of knowledge), whose intention is to lead those with a strong reflective bent of mind to God through knowledge.

Bhakti yoga, the *yoga* of love and devotion *(bhakti)* to God within.

Karma yoga, the practice of disinterested action, of learning to live and act without any thought of reward.

Haṭha yoga, consisting chiefly of physical postures *(āsanas* and *mudrās),* muscular locks or contractions *(bandhas),* and practices *(karmas)* for purifying the body, and control of the breath *(prāṇāyāma).*

Kuṇḍalinī yoga, the practice of awakening consciousness to the *kuṇḍalinī,* the latent or potential energy of the life force or *prāṇa* within the body.

Laya yoga (the *yoga* of absorption), in which the intention is to completely merge the mental faculties in the object of contemplation, such as the *chidākāsha* (sky of the body, within the forehead) or the light of the subtle centres *(chakras)* below the level of the eyes.

Mantra yoga, a partly physical and partly mental system whose devotees constantly repeat certain *mantras* (verbal formulae) with the attention fixed upon particular centres or *chakras* in order to gain mental energy and even psychic or miraculous powers.

Surat Shabd yoga, the *yoga* of bringing the soul *(surat)* into contact with the *Shabd* or Word, the divine creative power.

In practice, two or more forms of *yoga* may be combined without conflict into one system. *Karma yoga,* for instance, the living of a desire-free life, is an ethical approach generally recommended to all yogic practitioners.

5. Pūrva Mīmāṃsā

The two remaining schools of Indian philosophy and metaphysics are *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā* (*lit.* earlier inquiry) and *Uttara Mīmāṃsā* (*lit.* last inquiry). *Mīmāṃsā,* a term used particularly in regard to the study of Vedic texts, means reflection, consideration, investigation, inquiry, examination, discussion; it implies profound thought and serious deliberation with a view to ascertaining the Truth. *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā,* which concerns itself with the early Vedic texts, is often abbreviated simply to *Mīmāṃsā. Uttara Mīmāṃsā,* taking its inspiration from the *Upanishads,* is commonly called *Vedānta.*

The older of the two schools, the *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā* of Ṛishi Jaimini, concerns itself with the correct interpretation of the *Vedas,* and is generally treated as an interpretation of and commentary on Vedic ritual. In his *Mīmāṃsā Sūtras,* Jaimini attempted to systematize all the various Vedic precepts, laying down rules for resolving and explaining the obscure or doubtful passages and discrepancies in the Vedic texts, and trying to present a clear-cut method of interpretation. Knowledge of scriptures is not enough; religious action *(karma),* meaning the performance of religious duties and ceremonies, is also necessary. For this reason, it is also known as *Karma Mīmāṃsā. Pūrva Mīmāṃsā* plays a major role in Hindu life since worship and the correct performance of rituals are supposed to bring about the fulfilment of desires, spiritual and material.

For the correct performance of sacrifices, great stress is laid upon correct enunciation and accent. According to *Mīmāṃsā*, the relationship between a word and its meaning is natural, and therefore, eternal. A word is not very different from the letters comprising it. Letters are perceived by the ear. Correctly intoned, the sounds of a word are themselves consider to become the meaning. They establish an identity between the name and the thing named. *Mīmāṃsā*, therefore, even denies the existence of deities as separate from the *mantras* invoking them.

The main objectives of *Mīmāṃsā* are to establish the authority of the *Vedas* as the incontrovertible and self-revelational source of all knowledge, and to explain their true meaning. Jaimini's *sūtras*, however, do not claim to be a commentary on the *Vedas*. In fact, his aphorisms are not readily understandable, and were subsequently explained in a famous commentary by Shabaraswāmī (*c*.400 CE). This commentary in turn has been interpreted in different ways, giving rise to different schools, the two main ones being those of Prabhākara (C7th) and Kumārila (C8th).

Attempting to establish the self-revealed authority of the *Vedas*, *Mīmāṃsā* goes into many subtleties of the relationships between word and thought, psychology and epistemology (the nature of knowledge). Regarding the *Vedas* as self-revealed, *Mīmāṃsā* denies their authorship even to God. Indeed, it is not clear whether it even accepts the existence of an omnipotent, omnipresent and self-existent God, for it makes no mention of Him. Because of its detailed study of philological questions, it is also called *Vākya Shāstra* (the study of words).

Mīmāṃsā is generally considered to explain the *Vedas* as essentially injunctions concerning the performance of sacred rites. The *Upanishads*, the philosophical part, are interpreted merely as the providers of such injunctions. Even so, there are clear references to self-realization and *moksha* (liberation), and its attainment is given far greater prominence by later exponents of this school. It is therefore said that *Mīmāṃsā* is a *darshana*, a school of true spiritual realization, and not a mere commentary on Vedic ritual.[172]

Mīmāṃsā understands the self to be eternal and omnipresent, but conditioned by the empirical encumbrances of the body, the senses and the external world. This connection with things of the outside world constitutes bondage, and release means separation from them, once and for all. Hiriyanna, while laying stress on the *darshana* aspect of the system, adds, "the spirit of the *Brāhmaṇas* was to supersede the simple nature worship of the *mantras;* the spirit of the fully developed *Mīmāṃsā* is to supersede ritualism as taught in the *Brāhmaṇas*.... But the supersedence in neither stage is complete, so that the *Mīmāṃsā* as now known is an admixture of the rational and the dogmatic, the natural and the supernatural, and the orthodox and the heterodox."[173]

6. Vedānta

The original aim of *Uttara Mīmāṃsā* or *Vedānta*, the sixth school of Indian philosophy, was an attempt to interpret and rationalize the inherent ambiguity

of the *Upanishads*, and the apparent contradiction between the ritualistic *pūrva* (earlier) and *uttara* (last) parts of the *Vedas*, by bringing all the parts together into one systematic philosophy. This school teaches that *Brahman* is formless, and can be known only through the *Vedas;* that *Brahman* is the original and final cause of the creation; that *Brahman* is actionless, yet the visible world is His play or *līlā;* that the soul *(ātman)* is also without origin or end, and is also *Brahman;* that the individual soul is a reflection or glimpse of *Brahman;* that *Brahmajñāna* (knowledge of *Brahman*) can be obtained only through experience; that *Brahman* includes knowledge, and can be known through knowledge; that the path of knowledge – *jñāna-mārga* – is the only way to realize *Brahman.*

Vedānta consists of interpretations of the *Upanishads*, and is generally reckoned to have been initiated as a distinct philosophical approach when outlined by Bādarāyaṇa in his *Vedānta Sūtras,* thought to have been written sometime between 500 and 200 BCE. However, little is known about Bādarāyaṇa. One Indian tradition identifies him with the legendary Ṛishi Vyāsa, but this identity is uncertain. In fact, Shankara, the chief commentator on the *Vedānta Sūtras*, is silent on the subject.

In his *sūtras,* Bādarāyaṇa himself mentions as many as seven Vedantic teachers and refers to views other than his own, implying vital distinctions in general philosophic outlook. Such differences show that the teaching of the *Upanishads* was understood in several ways by Vedantic teachers from very early times. The interpretations of the other Vedantic teachers mentioned by Bādarāyaṇa have not survived, and his *Vedānta Sūtras* was probably the most influential of them all.

The *Vedānta Sūtras* are also known as the *Brahma Sūtras* because they expound the philosophy of *Brahman,* and as the *Shārīraka Sūtras* because they deals with nature of the unconditioned self incarnate in the human body *(sharīra).* The whole of the system is developed in several hundred *sūtras,* consisting mostly of only two or three words each. As a result of their extreme terseness, these *sūtras* themselves have been found to be almost unintelligible without a commentary, and they are open to a great variety of interpretations. The resulting commentaries are so diverse and often so conflicting that it is almost impossible to arrive at the precise views held by Bādarāyaṇa himself. The *sūtras* are, nevertheless, treated as being of great authority. Every important philosopher of ancient India has written commentaries on them, and they are considered to be among the three great works upon which the theology of India rests, the other two being the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavad Gītā.*

The *Vedānta Sūtras* consists of four chapters. The first deals with *Brahman,* the All-One, and His relationship to the world and the individual soul, seeking to reconcile the various Vedic passages on the subject. The second meets the objections to the view of *Brahman,* the soul and the world expounded in the first, and attempts to point out the fallacious nature of all rival theories on the subject. The third chapter speaks of the methods by which an individual can attain

knowledge of *Brahman*, also discussing questions of rebirth as well as those concerning psychology and theology. The last chapter considers the fruits of the knowledge of *Brahman*, and differences between the experiences of different aspirants. The deeper the experience, the greater the fruit. It discusses *moksha* (liberation), and the two paths possible after death – return (rebirth) and non-return (gradual liberation).

Direct perception and inference are regarded as the two sources of all knowledge, but perception in relation to the knowledge of *Brahman* is of a transcendental or spiritual character rather than sensory, since God is not perceived with the physical senses. *Shrutis* or revealed scriptures, particularly the *Upanishads*, are regarded as the fruit of spiritual perception, while the *Smṛitis*, the auxiliary scriptures, the *Mahābhārata*, the *Manu Smṛiti*, and even the *Bhagavad Gītā* are all identified as having been written as the result of inference. But, maintains the *Vedānta Sūtras*, even inference concerning spiritual matters depends on direct perception or revelation, since logic independent of revelation is blind and leads nowhere.

However, it is difficult to be precise as to what Bādarāyaṇa actually believed concerning the creation – whether it is a transformation of *Brahman* or is something superimposed upon Him – or concerning the relationship of the soul to *Brahman*. Because of this obscurity, various doctrines have flourished, all purporting to subscribe to *Vedānta*. Even so, all are agreed that the ultimate goal is the inner knowledge of *Brahman*, and that It can be experienced in this life. Such knowledge, once attained, burns away all the seeds of *karma* and bestows the promised liberation *(moksha)*.

Of the many philosophers who have commented on the *Vedānta Sūtras*, the more prominent ones have been Shankara, Bhāskara, Yādavaprakāsha, Rāmānuja, Nimbārka, Keshava, Nīlakaṇṭha, Madhva, Baladeva, Vallabha and Vijñānabhikshu. Of these, Shankara (*c.*788–820), the main proponent of the doctrine of *Advaita* (non-dualism or monism) and Rāmānuja (*c.*1017–1137), the chief proponent of *Vishishṭa Advaita* (qualified non-dualism), are the most well known. The other main schools of *Vedānta* are *Dvaita* (dualism) propounded by Madhva (*c.*1197–1276); the *Shuddha Advaita* (pure non-dualism) of Vallabha (*c.*1481–1533); and the *Dvaitādvaita* (dualistic non-dualism) or *Bhedabheda* (distinction without difference) of Nimbārka (C13th), Bhāskara and Chaitanya. Of these, the *Advaita Vedānta* of Shankara has become the most widely accepted. Shankara's *Advaita* is considered by the majority of educated Indians to represent the Vedantic truth, although Rāmānuja's view also has a number of adherents.

Advaita Vedānta is a doctrine of pure monism, believing in the existence of an all-encompassing, ultimate Principle. This ultimate Reality or *Brahman*, says Shankara, is one and all-pervading. In essence, there is nothing but this one, primal Reality or God who is pure consciousness or being. He says that all is consciousness; that It is one, and that there is nothing except It. Everything else is an illusion *(māyā)*. As the *Chhāndogya Upanishad* says:

> That which is the subtle essence –
> in That all beings have their existence.
> That is the True. That is the Self *(Ātman)*.
> O Shvetaketu, thou art That *(Tat tvam asi)*.
>
> *Chhāndogya Upanishad 6:8.7*

According to the *Upanishads,* the soul *(ātman)* and *Brahman* are identical. If a person experiences duality, this is due to illusion *(māyā),* caused by identification with his body, arising from mental obsession with the objects and sensations presented to the gross physical senses. The material world is thus mistakenly regarded as reality.

To exemplify the power of illusion, Shankara says that if, in the darkness, a man comes across a piece of rope lying in his path and believes it to be a snake, he will get frightened, even though the serpent only exists in his mind and imagination. When daylight comes, and the rope is recognized as such, the illusion vanishes. In the same way, man's idea that this world is real is only the illusion or imagination of his mind. All his concerns and reactions to its events are like the man's fear of a piece of rope, arising because he believes it to be something other than it is.

Shankara is emphatic that the most authentic knowledge is that which is obtained by personal experience *(anubhūti).* Next comes knowledge derived from *shruti* or the scriptures, since these record the personal experiences of the seers. The last is intellectual knowledge, derived from reasoning and inference, which is farthest removed from personal experience. Therefore, if there is a conflict between knowledge derived from *shruti* and that derived through reason, it is reason that has to be rejected. Discursive reason can provide only secondary knowledge. That knowledge cannot be certain, for its validity depends on the validity of some other knowledge. And if this other knowledge is also secondary, it will result in an infinite regress. The only proper basis for certain knowledge is immediate, personal experience. Moreover, although the scriptures *(shruti)* are authoritative, so far as a seeker is concerned the knowledge derived from them is secondary, for the truth they contain is based upon the experiences of others. It is to be accepted provisionally, as the testimony of those who have had experience, but *shruti* only fulfils itself when the truth it describes is experienced directly by the seeker, who does not need any such external authority thereafter.

As taught by Shankara, *Advaita Vedānta* is therefore a path of practical spirituality. To achieve realization of the oneness and all-pervading character of *Brahman,* the aspirant must firstly live a life of high moral integrity and detached action, of *karma yoga.* This provides the foundation from which the path to self-realization and spiritual liberation can be trodden. Shankara identifies three stages on this journey:

1. *Shravaṇa. Lit.* hearing; a study of the *Upanishads* under the instruction of a *guru.* It also implies that a discourse on an ideal is most effective when given by a living embodiment of that ideal.

2. *Manana. Lit.* reflection; considering that which has been taught through *shravaṇa;* the value of mental cogitation on what has been taught is recognized, although the ultimate aim is mystic experience.

3. *Nididhyāsana. Lit.* meditation, with the intention of achieving identity of the individual self with *Brahman.* This is continued until true, intuitive and immediate knowledge is experienced.

The path of *karma yoga* is also recommended in the *Bhagavad Gītā,* and – like the *Gītā* – Shankara also recommends *bhakti yoga,* the *yoga* of devotion, as an essential aspect of the path of liberation:

> Among all means of liberation, devotion is supreme. To seek earnestly to know one's real nature – that is said to be devotion.
>
> *Shankara, Vivekachūḍāmaṇi 31, SHI p.296*

The culmination of these practices is that of a *samādhi* (absorption) in which everything is dissolved in the higher Self or *Ātman:*

> Those who echo borrowed teachings are not free from the world. But those who have attained *samādhi* by merging the external universe, the sense organs, the mind and the ego in the pure consciousness of the *ātman* – they alone are free from the world, with its bonds and snares.
>
> *Shankara, Vivekachūḍāmaṇi 355–56, SHI p.297*

Vishishṭa Advaita (qualified non-dualism) was first introduced by the Vaishnavite (devotee of *Vishṇu*), Yamunā, and subsequently expounded by eleventh-century Rāmānuja. The Vaishnavite creed was popular at the time, but lacked the philosophical support of the *Upanishads,* a deficiency highlighted by Shankara's commentaries. Rāmānuja therefore sought to provide such support by trying to synthesize Vaishnavite theism with Upanishadic philosophy. The motivation appears to have been to provide a philosophical basis for the emotional and religious need to worship a personal deity, distinct from one's self, as in Vaishnavism.

Vishishṭa means distinct or particular, as opposed to *advaita* (non-dual). According to Rāmānuja, the individual self and physical nature, although parts of or aspects of *Brahman,* nevertheless possess their own distinct reality. He maintained that although *Brahman* as the ultimate Cause is one, He manifests himself as a multiplicity, which is also real. Although Rāmānuja asserted that *Brahman* is the only Reality in the sense that outside and independent of Him

there is no other Reality, yet *Brahman*'s oneness is not unqualified, because He contains within Himself all material objects as well as all souls. These, Rāmānuja maintained, are also real, and the one *Brahman* contains the many. Unlike Shankara, who considered multiplicity as illusory or false, Rāmānuja regards multiplicity as real. Rāmānuja recognized three factors as ultimate and real – matter *(achit),* soul *(chit)* and God *(Īshvara).* Though equally ultimate, matter and soul are wholly dependent upon God. Rāmānuja goes on to elaborate upon the nature of this dependence.

Vishishṭa Vedānta attempts to develop a complete system, which provides a philosophical basis for the doctrine of devotion to God. Personal theism had existed alongside the philosophy of the Absolute in earlier scriptures also, but this was now developed into a system as a counterpoise to the philosophy of Shankara, which was considered too absolutist. Rāmānuja wrote commentaries on the *Vedānta Sūtras* and the *Bhagavad Gītā* and these, along with his *Vādārtha-sangraha,* form the main scriptures of the system.

As in *Advaita,* the practical discipline of *Vishishṭa* also begins with *karma yoga,* which purifies the heart, making a person fit to know the truth. But it differs from *Advaita* in what follows. *Karma yoga* leads to *jñāna yoga* (the *yoga* of knowledge), which means meditation upon the nature of the self. The object is to realize how the soul or true self is different from its several accompaniments such as the body and the senses, and how attachment to them impedes spiritual progress.

Jñāna yoga does not complete the discipline: the seeker still has to know God, and the culminating stage is *bhakti yoga,* practised after success in *jñāna yoga. Bhakti* (devotion) here is equated with *dhyāna* (contemplation), and may be taken as meditation, but it also implies a loving contemplation of a personal God, accompanied by a feeling of utter dependence upon Him. Success in this discipline results in a vision of the Divine, although, according to Rāmānuja, actual *moksha* is attained only when the soul leaves the body at the time of death. There is no *jīvanmukti* (liberation while living) as in Shankara's *Advaita.* In death, the soul or self realizes union with God, as His body, His attribute.

A further significant difference between *Advaita* and *Vishishṭa Advaita* pertains to the obligation to perform religious rites. In *Vishishṭa,* this obligation continues even after the aspirant has begun to practise *bhakti yoga.* Moreover, according to Rāmānuja, the progression from *karma yoga* to *jñāna yoga* to *bhakti yoga* is only available to those of a higher caste. Those of a lower caste must follow the path of *prapatti* (*lit.* to take refuge with). This entails absolute self-surrender, yielding up the spirit to God in humility, and following His will. Salvation is then obtained through divine grace and compassion. A single moment of utter surrender is considered enough. In fact, *prapatti* marks the final stages of *bhakti,* and Rāmānuja considered *prapatti* itself to be a form of *jñāna.* However, he had to make some compromise with prevailing social mores, saying that while a *shudra* (low caste) could eventually gain salvation through *prapatti,* he would have to be born again in a higher caste before being finally liberated.

Shankara and Rāmānuja represent the two primary schools of *Vedānta,* as opposed to the *Dvaita Vedānta* (dualism) of the thirteenth-century Madhva. Moving away from the mystic experience of divine unity, Madhva taught that God and the individual soul are essentially different entities and are eternally separate; that *purusha* (spirit) and *prakṛiti* (matter), God and the creation are separate realities. Thus, although *Brahman* is considered to be the ruler of the universe, the universe itself is also real and eternal, and *Brahman* is not its essential Cause. Nevertheless, although souls are distinct from God, from one another and from matter, Madhva accepted that their existence is dependent on Him. God is the only independent or nondependent Being. Further, although souls exist in this world in a state of bondage, by spiritual striving through many lives, they can obtain release. Even so, according to Madhva, both the knower and the object of knowledge are real, for otherwise, knowledge would not be possible. In his view, transcendental consciousness, in which all distinction between knowledge, the knower and the known vanishes, is not possible.

Interestingly, most world religions contain at least an element of dualism, since they teach that man is separate from God, and God from man. To Shankara, however, as well as many other mystics, this is an illusion, arising from man's experience in this world, limited to the perception of his senses and his intellectual cogitations thereon. In the physical universe, he experiences a sense of dualism, and mistakenly assumes that this is the nature of the entire creation.

The Rāmāyaṇa, the Mahābhārata and the Bhagavad Gītā

Existing in parallel with the Vedic and Upanishadic tradition in Indian spiritual life are the two great Indian epics – the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata.* Stories being more appealing and accessible to the majority than philosophy and theology, a great deal of Hindu social and religious life has been drawn from these two epic sagas.

The *Rāmāyaṇa (lit.* relating to *Rāma)* is believed to have been composed by Ṛishi Vālmīki, probably around 300 BCE. Incorporating many ancient legends and drawing on the *Vedas,* it tells the story of Rāmachandra's efforts to regain his throne and rescue his wife, Sītā, from Rāvaṇa, the demon king of Lankā. Its best-known retelling, *Rām Charit Mānas,* is the work of the mystic Tulsīdās (*c.*1532–1623), and consists of 24,000 rhyming couplets, organized into seven books. His intention was to bring out the mystical aspects of the epic adventure, always in danger of becoming submerged beneath elaborations of the narrative itself. The story is deeply engrained in the religious life of India, and *Rāma,* short for Rāmachandra, has become a common name for God. Mystically, the *Rāmāyaṇa* is an allegory of the soul seeking its divine home, but many other spiritual truths are also conveyed to the reader through the medium of this compelling tale.

The *Mahābhārata,* traditionally ascribed to the legendary Ṛishi Vyāsa, is actually a story that grew with time, comprised of many separate episodes, and

written by many unknown poets and Hindu priests over a span of nearly a millennium, between the fifth century BCE and the fourth century CE. Consisting of more than 90,000 couplets, it tells the story of the ancient and turbulent kingdom of Kurukshetra, and the deeds of and contests between the sons of the two brothers Dhṛitarāshṭra and Pāṇḍu, descendants of Bharata. Like the *Rāmāyaṇa,* the *Mahābhārata* is a vehicle by which moral and spiritual teachings are made more digestible to the common man.

Book six of the *Mahābhārata* is notable for the inclusion of one of the most widely studied and influential sacred writings of the world, the *Bhagavad Gītā* (*lit.* sung by the Lord), probably composed around 200 BCE. Its simple yet sublime poetry, giving voice to eternal and universal spiritual truths, reaches far beyond the boundaries of religion and culture. Set on the battlefield, between two opposing armies before the fighting starts, it contains Kṛishṇa's response to questions posed by the warrior Arjuna concerning the nature of good and evil, and the spiritual struggle towards realization of the Divine. Much of Hindu spiritual philosophy and mysticism is encapsulated in the *Bhagavad Gītā*. Kṛishṇa speaks of *Brahman* as the divine Reality, describing the essentially divine nature of the *ātman* (soul), and its potential for realization of this divinity. He proposes *karma yoga* – living an ethical life, detached from the senses and from attachment to the fruits of actions – as the way to live in this world while discharging all responsibilities. And he indicates that the path of *bhakti yoga* – of love, devotion and surrender to God is the way to reach Him.

The Sant Tradition

The *Vedas,* the *Upanishads,* the *Rāmāyaṇa,* the *Mahābhārata,* the *Bhagavad Gītā,* the *Yoga Sūtras* of Patañjali, the Buddhist *Dhammapada* – these and many other texts from the rich heritage of India's religious tradition have formed the backdrop to India's spiritual life during the last three and a half millennia. But whatever a person's religious beliefs may be, actually practising the mystic path – following a path of moral and ethical discipline coupled with meditation – has an appeal only to a minority. To these comparatively few aspirants, the traditional forms of *yoga* or the various forms of Buddhist meditation have normally been regarded as the available choices.

India, however, has another tradition of mystics who have written, sometimes voluminously, but in a far simpler, nonintellectual and more colloquial language than is found in the majority of the traditional, sacred books of Hinduism. Scholars have dubbed this the '*Sant* (Saint) tradition'.

Only a handful of these mystics have become known in the West. Kabīr (*c.*1398–1518) is probably the best known, but India has known a number of such Saints and mystics, from at least the twelfth century right up to the present time. Among these were the *Gurus* following Guru Nānak (1469–1539), from whom the Sikh religion came into being. During the latter part of his life, Guru Arjun (1563–1606), the fifth *Guru* in this line, collected together the writings of

thirty such Saints and devotees, including the poems of his predecessors and many by himself, in a book which became the holy book of the Sikhs – the *Ādi Granth,* completed in 1604. Through the foresight of Guru Arjun, the writings of many earlier mystics have been preserved.

Notable among these Saints are Ravidās (C15th–16th), Nāmdev (*c.*1270–1350) and Jayadeva (C12th–13th), who came from a Hindu background, and Shaykh Farīd (*c.*1170–1265) and Bhīkhan (*c.*1480–1573), who were from the Muslim or Sufi tradition. Kabīr, a Muslim by birth, who taught in the Hindu stronghold of Vārāṇasī, is also well represented in the *Ādi Granth,* although his writings have survived independently.

Other mystics of the *Sant* tradition include Mīrābāī (*c.*1498–1547), Tulsīdās (*c.*1532–1623), Dādū (*c.*1544–1603), Tukārām (*c.*1598–1649), Sarmad (*c.*1618–60), Dariyā Sāhib of Bihar (1674–1780), Dariyā Sāhib of Rajasthan (1676–1758), Sahajobāī (C18th), Paltū (1710–80), Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh (1818–78), and a great many others. Some of these are well known in India. Mīrābāī's songs of longing and devotion to God, for instance, have been sung in the villages and towns of Rajasthan for over 400 years, and in modern times have been recorded by singers of international repute.

It is probably because these Saints have almost always written in plain and simple language, lacking appeal for scholarly translators, that they are not so well known in the West. Saints have no intellectual or philosophical pretensions. They are not trying to impress anybody. Coming with a mission to teach ordinary people the simple secrets of spirituality and the path to God, they express themselves in the everyday language of the common man.

These mystics have said that there is one God, a supreme Reality, to whom all other deities in the hierarchy of creation are subordinate. The essence of life in all beings is the soul, which is a drop of the divine Ocean of God. It is the soul that gives life to the body and mind. God is thus within the body, and He can be realized within. When He is found within, the soul then realizes that He pervades His entire creation, a creation which is comprised of this world and a vast hierarchy of heavenly worlds lying between the physical universe and the Divine.

Souls are lost in this world, say these Saints, captivated by its illusory attractions. According to their actions *(karma)* and desires in one life, souls pass into another in a seemingly endless cycle of birth, death and rebirth. Salvation or liberation is afforded by a mystic Saviour or Master who is not a prisoner of *karma.* He is a manifestation of the divine creative Power, which Saints have called the *Shabd* (Word), the *Nām* (Name), the *Bānī* (Word) and many other names. He teaches a path of moral integrity and deep meditation on the sound or music of this creative Power as the road that leads directly back to God. This path is, above all else, a practical mystic path, leading to union of the soul with God. Moreover, it is not a path of asceticism, but one that is to be followed while leading a normal human life, fulfilling all obligations and responsibilities in the

world. Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh called it *surat Shabd yoga* – the union of the soul *(surat)* with the Word *(Shabd)*.

Although followings are still attached to a number of these Indian Saints of the past, none have become so prevalent as the religion that formed around the teachings of Guru Nānak and his successors. Like most other religions, Sikhism did not start as such but evolved into a religion with the passage of time as a result of historical events, tradition and organizational changes.

Sikhism[174]

The world has known many mystics and religious reformers. But although a following may have developed around their teachings after their death, few such groups have evolved a sufficient identity to be regarded as altogether new religions. Even when new religions do form, they are invariably a product of the cultural and religious background of their followers. Christianity and Islam arose from the backdrop of Judaism. Christians accept the Jewish Bible as a part of their faith, though they may call it the Old Testament. Likewise, both Islam and the *Qur'ān,* the holy book on which Islam is founded, contain many elements drawn from Judaism. Hinduism has evolved and changed over perhaps four millennia and contains such a mix of ingredients that it is impossible to assign any particular creed to it. Yet, Hinduism is identifiable, though it may not be definable. Perhaps it is more of a culture than a religion, for the two are closely intertwined.

It could hardly be otherwise, for there are few people capable of radically changing their viewpoint, and adopting an entirely new philosophy or religious teaching. To gain new ground, a faith that ultimately becomes a new religion must relate to the existing social, political and religious climate. It must also have appeal. People must feel that they are going to gain something from adopting the new faith. It must also address a need. Religions therefore form when the social and political circumstances are propitious. Genuinely new religions are thus a rarity, and they do not appear overnight. When their history is traced, there is always an evolution, as they develop an identity that distinguishes them from their cultural and religious background.

This is certainly true of Sikhism. No one would deny that it is a peculiarly Indian religion. It arose in a very specific geographical area – the Punjab – from a cultural and religious climate of Islam and Hinduism, and a need that was peculiarly regional. Nor was it ever certain, once the primary social and political needs had been met, that Sikhism would flourish as an independent religion. As recently as the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, in response to a period of diversity in Sikh religious life, Sikhism had become polarized into two extremes, epitomized by two groups: the *Sanātan* Sikhs and the *Tat Khālsā* (the essential *Khālsā*).

The *Sanātan* Sikhs, centred in Amritsar, saw themselves as part of a broad and tolerant Hindu society in which people from a spread of cultural and reli-

gious identities could call themselves Sikhs. Idol worship, folk religion, a variety of rituals according to personal preference, the caste system and different marriage rites for different castes, acceptance of the sanctity of Hindu and Muslim holy places as well as those of the Sikhs – all these were tolerated as a part of the rich heritage of Sikhism, the Punjab and Hinduism in general. Those who did not feel it mandatory to follow the Sikh code of conduct and belief *(rahit)* and were not members of the Sikh *Khālsā* – the religious order founded by the tenth and last Guru, Guru Gobind Singh (1666–1708), which included strict principles of dress and appearance – could regard themselves as Sikhs just as much as members of the *Khālsā*. In 1899, the *Sanātan* Sikh, Nārāiṇ Singh, published a booklet, reflecting these beliefs. It was called, *Sikh Hindū Hain (Sikhs are Hindus)*.

On the other side of the debate, the *Tat Khālsā*, centred in Lahore, represented a more radical and more definitive Sikhism. Their response was Kahn Singh Nabha's booklet, also published in 1899, *Ham Hindū Nahīn (We are not Hindus)*. True Sikhs, argued the *Tat Khālsā*, should have one identity. They should pay no heed to caste; they should ignore Hindu superstitions such as astrology; they should not visit Muslim or Hindu shrines; and they should perform only Sikh rituals.

But to make definitive statements on such matters was not easy. There were, for example, no universally established Sikh marriage ceremonies, and it took until the Anand Marriage Act of 1909 to establish circumambulation of the Sikh holy book, the *Ādi Granth* (also called the *Guru Granth Sāhib*) as the approved Sikh marriage ceremony. Additionally, the existing *rahit-nāmās* (manuals of Sikh conduct and belief) contradicted each other and contained things unacceptable to any Sikh, of any persuasion. These, the *Tat Khālsā* maintained, were clearly corrupt. But what constituted the 'original'? As the *Sanātan* Sikhs pointed out, there had been no such things as Sikh marriage ceremonies or codes of conduct and belief in the days of the Gurus. The debate was as much political and social, as religious. What mattered was how people felt at that point in time, not what the Gurus had done. By degrees, the *Tat Khālsā* slowly gained the upper hand, and the prevalent Sikh identity of modern times gradually came into being. To be a Sikh meant being a member of the *Khālsā*. Even so, it took until 1945, and much discussion, before the publication of an authoritative *rahit*, the *Sikh Reht Maryādā*, a short document that remains the definitive exposition of what is means to be a Sikh.

It was out of the *Tat Khālsā* that the more radical *Akālī* movement, prominent in recent times, came into being after the end of the First World War (1914–18). One of the first initiatives of the *Akālī* movement was to bring the Sikh *gurdwārās* (temples) under a single ownership and management. Until that time, the *gurdwārās* had been left to the vagaries of the individual *mahants* (priests) in charge, with varying results, as well as some confusion as to who actually owned them. Following the Sikh Gurdwaras Act of 1925, the new legally

constituted, Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), whose members were elected by Sikhs, became the manager of most of the major *gurdwārās* in the Punjab, assuming an increasingly influential role in Sikh affairs. It also meant that the central Sikh organization had become a major property owner. Perhaps even more significantly, it distinguished Sikhs from Hindus in a number of ways, stipulating, for instance, that Sikhs could have "no other religion". The 1925 Act thus laid the foundation for the *Sikh Reht Maryādā* and the eventual domination of the Sikh community by the *Khālsā.*[175]

The *Sikh Reht Maryādā,* "the code of Sikh conduct and conventions" opens with "the definition of a Sikh". It details what is required of a Sikh, in both religious and social contexts. It explains how Sikh religious services and ceremonies should be conducted; it describes the correct reading, exposition and respectful treatment of the *Guru Granth Sāhib,* and the correct preparation of *kaṛāh prashād* ("sacred pudding"); it outlines the social conduct expected of Sikh men and women; it specifies the approved Sikh rites for naming a child, for marriages, for funeral rites, and for other significant occasions in life, such as moving house, setting up a new business, sending a child to school, and so on; and it describes how to conduct the adult ceremony of "ambrosial baptism" or "initiation" and the means of "imposing chastisement" on those who confess a lapse of Sikh principles.

In this outline of Sikhism, a Sikh is defined as "Any human being who faithfully believes in One Immortal Being, the Ten Gurus, ... the *Guru Granth Sāhib,* the utterances and teachings of the ten Gurus, and the baptism bequeathed by the tenth Guru, and who does not owe allegiance to any other religion." "A Sikh should wake up in the ambrosial hours (three hours before dawn), take a bath and, concentrating his/her thoughts on One Immortal Being, repeat the name, *Wāhiguru.*" He or she must daily recite various passages from the *Guru Granth Sāhib,* and give in voluntary service *(seva).* He or she "should not take hemp *(cannabis),* opium, liquor, tobacco, in short, any intoxicant"; should not pierce the nose or ears or any other part of the body for ornament; should not gamble; should not kill his/her daughter; should earn an honest living; should remain faithful in thought and deed to his/her spouse; and should greet other Sikhs with *"Wāhiguru jī kā Khālsā, Wāhiguru jī kī Fateh."* In addition, "A Sikh's daughter must be married to a Sikh," and Sikh men should adhere to the code of external appearance introduced by the tenth Guru. These are: not to cut the hair on any part of the body, always to carry a dagger or sword (nowadays, usually only a small token blade), and always to wear a comb, knee-length breeches (*kachhehra,* nowadays, usually as underwear), and a steel bracelet on the right wrist. Further, "It is not proper for a Sikh woman to wear veil or keep her face hidden by veil or cover. For a Sikh, there is no restriction or requirement as to dress except that he must wear *kachhehra* and turban. A Sikh woman may or may not tie turban." The *Sikh Reht Maryādā* also contains many prohibitions against specifically Hindu and Muslim customs and beliefs.[176]

According to this definition, Sikhs are certainly no longer Hindus. Recent Sikh history thus exemplifies the way in which new religious movements either develop their own identity or merge back into their cultural and religious background. The twentieth century saw the definition and structuring of Sikhism as a defined religion, saving it from Hindu eclipse. But what are the origins of Sikh tradition?

Guru Nānak, the first in the line of Gurus that was to become the foundation of the Sikh religion, was born at Talwaṇḍī, near Lahore (now in Pakistan), in 1469. His family were Hindu, and the future Guru was raised as a Hindu. The community of North India at that time was a mix of Hindu and Muslim.

The first Muslim traders and settlers to reach India had crossed the Arabian Sea in the seventh and eighth centuries. But since the early eleventh century, North India had been subject to the raids and conquests of Muslim rulers and adventurers from the northwest, who came through the mountain passes of Afghanistan and Baluchistan. Afghanistan, through the Khyber or Gumal Passes, was the northern gateway to India, and whoever held power in Kābul or Ghazna invariably turned their attention to the potentially rich plunderings of India. Likewise, for those holding power in eastern Iran, Baluchistan and the Bolan Pass were the gateway to Sind, and hence across the Indus, into India.

Until the rise of British and European power, India, Central Asia and the Middle East had long been a battleground in which a variety of Turkish, Iranian and Afghan dynasties had struggled for supremacy. Often, a period of tolerably stable rule in one empire or kingdom would end with the demise of its ruler, when his sons attempted to carve up their father's legacy between them. Their overall power being weakened by the resulting civil war left them open to invasion, intrigue and conquest by some neighbouring party. It was also difficult for rulers to maintain power in both their homeland and their conquered territories, a situation leading inevitably to instability. The larger the empire, the more difficult it was to control and to retain. As well as power and plunder, the prize was income, derived by the rulers either by excessive taxation of the agrarian and static peoples (usually half the produce, plus a tax on property) or by raiding unsubdued neighbouring territories. This was their way of life, and it had been that way for centuries.

Although Muslim influence did at times extended far into South India, Muslim rule was never permanently established there. It was North India, open to invasion from Afghanistan and eastern Iran, that invariably suffered most. Since the establishment of the first Turkish Sultanate in Delhi in 1193, a series of ruling Muslim dynasties had come and gone. Shortly before Guru Nānak (1469–1539) was born, the first ruler of the Lodī dynasty, Bahlūl Lodī (ruled 1451–89), the most powerful of the Punjab chieftains, had taken Delhi. Holding together a loose alliance of Turkish and Afghan chiefs, he began to extend his 'empire', an expansion which was continued by his second son, Sikandar (ruled 1489–1517).

The third Lodī *sulṭān,* Sikandar's eldest son, Ibrāhīm (ruled 1517–26), lacked the character of his father and grandfather, and his attempts to establish power by harsh brutality soon brought discontent and intrigue to his court. The governor of the Punjab, Dawlat Khān Lodī, and 'Ālam Khān Lodī, Ibrāhīm's uncle, consequently invited Bābur, Mughul ruler of Kābul, to help them overthrow the government. Bābur, who had already made four raids on India, accepted the invitation. With a small force of 12,000 men, speed, skilful military tactics and superior artillery, Bābur defeated Ibrāhīm's army of 100,000 at Pānipāt, in April 1526. Ibrāhīm was killed in the battle, and so began the Mughul rule of North India, reaching its height in the long, stable and tolerant reign of Akbar the Great (1542–1605), who came to power when he was only fourteen. And it was the Mughul dynasty which so much dominated the political and social climate in which Guru Nānak and his successors lived and taught, and in which the movement that was to become the Sikh religion was born.

Practically nothing is really known of Guru Nānak's life. The official Muslim chroniclers do not mention him at all, while the first five Gurus, whose *shabds* (hymns) were compiled by the fifth Guru, Guru Arjun, into what became the Sikh sacred book, the *Ādi Granth,* seem to have made a point of saying nothing in their poetry about their own personal lives. Even the scholar Bhāī Gurdās, nephew and disciple of the third Guru, who lived until the time of the sixth Guru, and whose writings are preserved in the *Vārān Bhāī Gurdās,* says very little of the Gurus' lives. No doubt the Gurus meant to emphasize that their teachings were of far greater importance than their individual lives. Bhāī Gurdās would have known a great deal about the Gurus, but presumably out of respect for their wishes and his understanding of their teachings, he conveys but little of it in his writings.

Nevertheless, a great many stories are in circulation concerning the life of Guru Nānak. The majority of these stem from a group of documents known as the *janamsākhīs* (*lit.* 'birth witnesses'), generally translated as 'life stories'. The *janamsākhīs* are hagiographic accounts of Guru Nānak's life containing collections of individual stories *(sākhīs).* Sometimes, the *sākhīs* are worked into some sort of chronological history; at other times they are left to stand as independent incidents. They contain much legendary and miraculous material, sometimes interspersed with interpretations of Guru Nānak's writings. All of them were written down from a fluid oral tradition, the earliest during the first half of the seventeenth century, around a hundred years after Guru Nānak's death.

Often entertaining, which accounts for their popularity, the *janamsākhīs* are not generally regarded as reliable sources of historical or biographic information, and few scholars argue for their authenticity. In a number of instances, individual *sākhīs* have clearly been created as settings for Guru Nānak's *shabds* taken from the *Ādi Granth.* Other *sākhīs* relate 'events' that seem likely to have arisen as a setting for something memorable that the Guru said, perhaps based on examples that he often used. Altogether, there are in the region of one hundred

and fifty to two hundred individual *sākhīs* related in the *janamsāskhīs,* many of which are repeated, with variations, in the various texts. From these, a very brief overview of the life of Guru Nānak may be gleaned.

He was born in 1469, probably in the month of April, in the village of Talwaṇḍī, to Hindu parents, Kālū and Tripatā, of the *Khatrī* caste, a leading caste in the Punjab of that time. He had one sister, Nānakī, who was married to Jai Rām. Guru Nānak was married to Sulakhaṇī, the daughter of Mūlā, who lived in Baṭālā. They had two sons, Lakhmī Dās and Srī Chand. As a young man, Guru Nānak seems to have worked for Dawlat Khān Lodī at Sulṭānpur. Sometime during this period, he experienced a divine calling to begin his ministry, teaching the path of the mystic Name *(Nām)* or *Shabd* (Word). He travelled extensively, undertaking long tours throughout the whole of India and probably beyond. He may well have travelled as far as Baghdad and Mecca, but he was probably back in North India by 1520, when Bābur attacked the town of Sayyidpur, and during Bābur's invasions between 1524 and 1526.

At some point, a wealthy disciple had donated some land to the Guru, on the north bank of the River Rāvī. After his period of travelling was over, the Guru made this land his headquarters, and the village of Kartārpur grew up around him. Here, his disciples and others would have come to hear him speak and to receive his blessings. The Guru continued to make shorter journeys to the surrounding areas, attracting many disciples. One of these was Lahiṇā, a Hindu who lived in the village of Khadur. Lahiṇā was very devoted and obedient to his Guru, and Guru Nānak renamed him Angad, meaning 'a part *(ang)* of himself'. Some while before his death, Guru Nānak appointed Lahiṇā as his successor. Guru Nānak died towards the end of the 1530s, probably in September 1539.[177]

Like Guru Nānak, genuine historical information concerning his successors is sparse. The little that is known of their lives is reconstructed and conflated from a mixture of tradition, legend and surmise, with few verifiable details. There are no *janamsākhīs* dedicated to the lives of the later Gurus, although Guru Angad is mentioned in some of the *janamsākhīs,* especially the two mid-eighteenth-century texts, the *Mahimā Prakāsh (Vāratak* and *Kavitā).* But like all such accounts they were written from the oral tradition, and scholars do not regard them as historically reliable. There is also a *sawayyā* (eulogy) of Guru Angad in the *Ādi Granth,*[178] stressing that he was the rightful successor of Guru Nānak in preference to Guru Nānak's sons, who had opposed the appointment. In the nineteenth century, all these sources were merged by Santokh Singh in his *Sūraj Prakāsh.* In fact, Santokh Singh's conflated accounts of the *janamsākhīs,* with additional material from the oral tradition, and published as *Nānak Prakāsh* and *Sūraj Prakāsh,* have become the standard account of the lives of all the Gurus.[179]

Guru Angad (1504–52) would have inherited from Guru Nānak a group of disciples drawn from Hindu and Muslim backgrounds. They probably called themselves *sikhs* (disciples), but the word would have had no further connotation

than that. Guru Nānak so clearly decries the power that orthodox religion exercised over peoples' minds that the last thing he would have had in mind would have been the creation of a new sect or religion. The size of Guru Nānak's following is unknown. The *janamsākhīs* say that wherever he went, he attracted large crowds. But given the hagiographic nature of these accounts, they could hardly be expected to say otherwise. Though Guru Nānak's emphasis and personal style would have reflected the social and religious circumstances of North India at that time, his teachings – preserved in the *Ādi Granth* – were those of North India's many other Saints *(Sants)*. So too were the teachings of Guru Angad.

Bearing in mind the traditional nature of the sources, the following may be said of the life of the second Guru. He was born a Hindu, son of Pherū, of the *Khatrī* caste, probably in March 1504. His wife's name was Khīvī, also a *Khatrī*, and they had two sons and at least one daughter. The two sons are portrayed in the *Mahimā Prakāsh Kavitā* as miscreants, but the daughter is depicted as a devotee of the Gurus. Guru Angad probably came to his Guru sometime during his late twenties, after which he divided his time between Kartārpur and his family home in Khadur. After his succession, due to the hostility of Guru Nānak's two sons, he moved his headquarters to Khadur.[180]

Guru Angad died in 1552, appointing Guru Amardās as his successor. Like his two predecessors, Guru Amardās was of the *Khatrī* caste, from a family of farmers and grain merchants. He was born in the village of Bāsarke, near the site that would one day become the Sikh centre of Amritsar. Previously, he had lived the life of a devout Hindu, and was married, with two sons, and at least one daughter, probably two. Guru Angad's daughter had been married into the family of Guru Amardās, and – according to the traditional story – it was by overhearing her singing one of Guru Nānak's *shabds* that he came into contact with his Guru.

The birth date of Guru Amardās is uncertain, but is traditionally believed to have been 1479. All the traditions indicate that he was in his early seventies when he was appointed Guru, probably seventy-three. His ministry lasted for twenty-two years, and he died in 1574, when he was probably ninety-five.

Again according to tradition, Guru Angad instructed Guru Amardās to make his headquarters at the new village of Goindvāl, a short way from Khadur down the River Beas. Guru Angad had died after a ministry of twelve and a half years. It was now perhaps as much as fifty years since Guru Nānak had accepted his first disciples in the early 1500s, and around thirty years since he had settled in Kartārpur after his extensive travels. The community of disciples (the *sangat*) would have been growing steadily, and many children of the early disciples would have grown up in families of disciples. Some of these children would no doubt have accepted their parents' beliefs.

This was the situation inherited by the third Guru, Guru Amardās, and although there is no record of actual numbers, it seems that during his time, the population of disciples began to mushroom. According to tradition, the Guru's

reputation became such that he was visited by the Mughul Emperor Akbar (1542–1605), whose long and remarkable reign (1556–1605), spanning nearly half a century, was one of comparative stability and religious tolerance. The Emperor was so impressed by the Guru and his work that he wished to grant to him the revenue of several villages. The Guru politely but firmly declined the offer, and it is said that Akbar gave the revenue of the villages to the daughter of Guru Amardās as a wedding gift.

If the story is correct, it would have no doubt enhanced the standing of the Guru among the general population, and have brought his teachings to the attention of a wider audience. Either way, the *sangat* had grown sufficiently for the Guru to institute a system of local speakers, known as *mañjīs* (*lit.* string bed), referring to the place where the speakers would sit, with the *sangat* sitting on the ground around them. Like Guru Amardās, the previous Gurus had all taught the path of meditation on and remembrance of the mystic Name. The purpose of the speakers would have been to remind the disciples of the principles of the practical spiritual path they were following, to provide encouragement for their meditation, and no doubt to present the teachings to any newcomers who were present.

It is uncertain how the early disciples held their meetings in the absence of their Guru, and it is often presumed that they sat together and sang their Guru's *shabds,* thereby reminding themselves of the Guru and his teachings. Guru Amardās may therefore have introduced the system of *mañjīs* because the increase in numbers made communal singing impractical, or perhaps because it was becoming too much of a ritual.

Guru Nānak and Guru Amardās had both opened free *langars* (public kitchens) at their respective headquarters. There is no record of how these *langars* were conducted, or how many were fed, but in the time of Guru Amardās, again probably in response to the increase in numbers, the *langar* was reorganized. Significantly, no distinction of caste was to be made. This was no small matter. In Hindu society, no one of a higher caste would eat with anyone of a lower caste. In many instances, a person of a high caste would not even speak directly to a person of a low caste. Communication was conducted through an intermediary. But the Gurus – like all the *Sants* – taught that all human beings are of the same spiritual essence. No one is higher or lower than another. In the quest for inner contact with the mystic Name and spiritual liberation of the soul, it is purity of heart which makes the difference, not social status. Now (if not before), all were to sit together in rows on the ground to eat their meal, regardless of caste. This institution became so firmly established that, even in modern times, an essential aspect of a *gurdwārā* is its casteless *langar,* where all sit together in rows on the ground, and eat a communal meal.

According to tradition, it is also said that the third Guru dug a sacred well *(bāolī)* at Goindvāl, to serve as a place of pilgrimage for the disciples; that he introduced particular *bhaṇḍārā* (festival) days; that he compiled a collection of

the *shabds* of his predecessors, of himself, and of those earlier Indian *Sants* and devotees whose teachings had been the same (and which became an important precursor to the *Ādi Granth*); and that he made the decision (without starting the work) to excavate a sacred pool on the site which was to become his successor's centre, later known as Amritsar.

However, while there would have been good practical reasons to dig a well in a new village (large open step-wells were common in North India at the time), there is no reason to presume that it would have been intended as a place of pilgrimage. Likewise, the introduction of particular days when the Guru would be present at his centre at Goindvāl to hold *satsangs* (discourses) and to give *darshan,* would have been an understandable practical step, associated with the increase in numbers. It would have made it possible for the disciples to know in advance when the Guru intended to be in residence, so that they could plan their lives accordingly.

Collecting together the writings of his predecessors would similarly have been a practical way to ensure the preservation of their writings, and to protect against the introduction of spurious *shabds.* Moreover, these writings were in the common Punjabi language of the people. The Hindu sacred texts were in ancient Sanskrit and the *Qur'ān* was in Arabic, making them available only to the *brāhmaṇs* and the *mullās,* who maintained a strict monopoly over their respective sacred writings. There is little doubt that these collections of *shabds* in the vernacular would have proved immensely popular among the ordinary people. There is no reason to suppose that the Guru had in mind the creation of a holy book.

Whether Guru Amardās really made any decision to build a pool on the site that ultimately became Amritsar is uncertain. The belief is traditional, and there is no historical evidence for it. But again, if he did, it must be presumed that there was a good practical reason for it, perhaps for bathing or water storage, or even as an environmental enhancement. The writings of the first five Gurus are unanimous in their insistence on the importance of the inner life of meditation as the means of finding God, and the uselessness of all outward ceremonies as a means of spiritual uplift. To have introduced cultic rituals at this or any other stage would have been quite out of keeping with their teachings.

In fact, it is commonly believed that the third Guru went out of his way to help people free themselves from unnecessary or spiritually unhealthy customs. He discouraged the practice of *purdāh* (the seclusion of women in the home, and their complete veiling when out of the house); he advocated monogamy; he encouraged inter-caste marriages and the remarrying of widows; and he forbade *sātī* (the immolation of widows on their husband's funeral pyre). All these measures were to help people free themselves from restrictive or damaging social practices. Perhaps it was this stand against certain social and religious customs which led to the steady growth of opposition and hostility from the *brāhmaṇs* and the Muslim religious authorities.[181]

The ministry of the third Guru was therefore one of adjustment to the needs of a growing *sangat*, with the development of a significant number of centres spread throughout North India. But as the writings of Guru Amardās amply indicate, his teachings and the spiritual emphasis remained the same, even though the practical needs were changing. Guru Amardās died in 1574, having appointed his son-in-law, Jeṭhā Soḍhī, popularly known as Guru Rāmdās (1534–81), as his successor.

Like his predecessors, the available historical information concerning Guru Rāmdās is largely traditional. The content of his *shabds* (noted for their fine melodies and rhythms) indicates his continuing emphasis on meditation on the divine *Nām* (Name) or *Shabd* (Word), and there is no reason to believe that he taught anything other than his three predecessors. The *sangat* continued to grow apace, and although there was no doubt opposition from the *brāhmaṇs* and the *mullās*, the tolerant Akbar was in power, and the *sangat* was permitted to flourish without hindrance or any state-initiated persecution.

Because of opposition to his successorship from the sons of Guru Amardās, the fourth Guru founded a new centre, which became known as Rāmdāspur, and later as Amritsar. The land was purchased from the owners, but seems to have been associated in some way with the villages whose revenue Akbar had allocated as a wedding gift to the daughter of Guru Amardās, the wife of Guru Rāmdās. Guru Rāmdās is also said to have excavated the sacred pool.

The continued growth of the *sangat* required the introduction of another level of administration, generally credited to Guru Rāmdās, though sometimes to Guru Amardās. Groups of local *sangats* were placed under the wider administration of a trusted *masand* (*lit.* raised platform or throne), a sort of area representative who could transmit messages from the Guru to the *sangats*, could seek the Guru's advice concerning any local problems, and could also convey monetary donations back to the central administration. The Guru would have ensured that all such offerings were used for the overall needs of the *sangat* and for other worthy causes. Among the *mañjīs* in the time of Guru Rāmdās was the disciple of Guru Amardās, Bhāī Gurdās, who spent some time in Agra. The ministry of Guru Rāmdās lasted seven years, before he died in 1581, appointing the youngest of his three sons, Arjun Mal, as his successor.

It is impossible to determine the size of the *sangat* inherited by Guru Arjun. The need for the *mañjīs* and *masands* indicates a widespread population of disciples, certainly into the thousands and probably into the tens of thousands, maybe more, but any estimate of numbers is only speculation. Like his predecessors, Guru Arjun experienced opposition from within his own camp, this time in the shape of his eldest brother, Prithī Chand. Presumably desirous of the prestige of office, the machinations of Prithī Chand were a serious nuisance to Guru Arjun for some years. Both Guru Arjun and Bhāī Gurdās suggest that Prithī Chand even contemplated doing serious injury to the Guru's son, Hargobind, who was born in 1595. Eventually, Prithī Chand set himself up as a rival Guru.

Bhāī Gurdās dubbed him a *mīṇā* (scoundrel), and it became the name by which his followers were known *(Mīṇās)*.

Guru Arjun must have been a dynamo of focused activity. In Amritsar, he built a *gurdwārā,* presumably as a meeting hall. According to tradition, the foundation stone was laid by the Sufi, Miyān Mīr, perhaps to emphasize that Muslims and Hindus were all welcome at the Guru's *satsang*. How many the hall could hold is unknown because it, and several of its successors, were destroyed by the later Mughul and Afghan rulers in their ultimately unsuccessful attempts to crush the Sikhs into submission. This building is often described as a temple for worship and pilgrimage, as it is today, but this seems unlikely. Like his predecessors, Guru Arjun also writes of the futility of external observances, and it seems most unlikely that he would have built a temple in order to start his own forms of ceremonial worship. The beautiful and ornate Sikh temple that stands in Amritsar today was built long after, during the eighteenth century (1776). Known as the Harimandir Sāhib, it was called the Golden Temple by the British, and is the centre of modern Sikh worship.

Guru Arjun also seems to have toured extensively in North India, and perhaps beyond, and it is likely that the *sangat* expanded considerably during his time. Traditionally, he is credited with having founded the villages of Taran Tāran (where he is said to have built another pool), Srī Hargobindpur on the River Beas, and a second Kartārpur (between the River Beas and the River Sutlej). Probably, these places were originally founded as *satsang* centres, to address the needs of the growing community of disciples to meet together and do communal *seva* (service). Selfless service to the Guru and the *sangat* is emphasized in the *Ādi Granth* as a means of developing humility, and thus supporting meditation. The Gurus must therefore have been interested in introducing practical measures whereby their disciples could learn to be of service. This would also have been one of the purposes of the *langars,* and likewise of any financial donations.

The fifth Guru is also remembered for having collected into one *poṭhī* (book), the *shabds* of his four predecessors, along with his own substantial writings, and those of thirty other *Sants* and devotees of both Hindu and Islamic backgrounds. According to the traditional story, Guru Arjun was initially motivated by the activities of Prithī Chand, who was making his own collection of *shabds,* adding writings of his own and attributing them to the Gurus. First of all, the Guru visited Mohan, the son of Guru Amardās, and persuaded him to part with the collection of *shabds* assembled by his father, and known as the Goindvāl *poṭhīs* or Mohan *poṭhīs.* This earlier collection no longer exists, but it is believed to have been used as the model for Guru Arjun's larger compilation. He also summoned Bhāī Gurdās, and set up temporary 'office facilities' on the outskirts of Amritsar, where the *shabds* to be included were dictated to Bhāī Gurdās or those he was to copy from other material were indicated. The first draft of this prodigious exercise still exists as manuscript number 1245 in the

library of the Guru Nānak Dev University at Amritsar,[182] and his final text became known as the *Kartārpur Bīṛ* (Kartārpur Volume).

The date when Guru Arjun began work on this project is uncertain, probably 1603, but the task was completed in 1604. The works of the ninth Guru, Guru Tegh Bahādur (1621–75), were later added by his son, the tenth Guru, and the entire result subsequently became known as the *Ādi Granth* (*lit.* first book) to distinguish if from the *Dasam Granth* (*lit.* tenth book) of the tenth Guru. After the tenth Guru, the *Ādi Granth* took on a central place in Sikh life and worship, and has remained so to the present time.

The fifty-year window of peace and tolerance in North India, created by Akbar, and which had been used to such advantage by Guru Arjun and his two predecessors, came to an abrupt end with Akbar's death in 1605. Like so many Muslim rulers and warlords of those times, Akbar's son, Jahāngīr (ruled 1605–27) was a fanatic. He had heard how the Guru had been taking both Hindus and Muslims into his fold. He had also heard that the Guru was supposed to have blessed the rebellious Prince Khusrau (Jahāngīr's son), applying a saffron mark to his forehead. He writes in his memoirs:

> At last, when Khusrau passed along this road, this insignificant fellow (Guru Arjun) proposed to wait upon him. Khusrau happened to halt at the place where he was, and he came out and did homage to him. He behaved to Khusrau in certain special ways, and made on his forehead a finger mark in saffron, which the Indians call *qaśqah*, and is considered to be propitious. So many of the simple-minded Hindus, nay, many foolish Muslims too, had been fascinated by his ways and teachings. He was noised about as a religious and worldly leader. They called him *"Guru"*, and from all directions, crowds of fools would come to him, and express great devotion to him. This busy traffic had been carried on for three or four generations. For years, the thought had been presenting itself to my mind that either I should put an end to this false traffic, or he should be brought into the fold of Islam.
>
> *Tuzuk-i Jahāngīrī (Memoirs of Jahāngīr) 1:72, in HS1 pp.59–60*

Soon after Jahāngīr's accession to power, Guru Arjun was taken into custody by the Mughul authorities in Lahore, and died in jail. There is no historical record of what happened to him, but he is believed to have died the death of a martyr from the effects of severe torture.

According to the traditional story, of which there are several variants and interpretations, after Khusrau's unsuccessful rebellion, the prince fled northwards from his father's wrath. On the way, he sought an audience with Guru Arjun, and may also have requested the Guru's assistance. The nature of any help provided, if any, is unknown, but it is unlikely that the Guru would have refused to see him, had he asked. Jahāngīr, however, exacted swift justice from those suspected of helping his son, and he took this as the excuse he needed "to

put an end to this false traffic". A heavy fine was imposed on the Guru, and on his refusal to pay or to admit the charge, he was arrested and sentenced to death. The essence of the story is supported by an entry in Jahāngīr's journal:

> I fully knew his heresies, and I ordered that he should be brought into my presence, that his houses and children be made over to Murtażā Khān, that his property be confiscated, and that he should be put to death with torture.
>
> *Tuzuk-i Jahāngīrī (Memoirs of Jahāngīr) 1:72–73, in HS1 p.60*

Among the Guru's persecutors, implicated in traditional stories of the Guru's torture and death, was a Hindu banker of Lahore, Chandū Shāh, who had been refused when seeking Guru Arjun's son as a husband for his daughter. A number of people are said to have interceded on behalf of the Guru, including the Sufi, Miyān Mīr, but to no avail. The Guru was tortured and died. According to one account, during an interval in the torture, he was permitted to bathe himself in the River Rāvī. Entering the water, the shock of the cold water was too much for his tortured body, and he was carried away by the current. Tradition also relates that while in Lahore jail, the Guru instructed the aged and faithful disciple, Bhāī Buddha, to install his eleven-year-old son, Hargobind (1595–1644), as his successor.[183]

The story of Guru Arjun's death is supported to some extent by an interesting source of information concerning the sixth and seventh Gurus, the *Dabistān-i Mażāhib (School of Manners),* a contemporary chronicle of religions in India, written in Persian by the Muslim, Muḥsin Fānī. The author claims to have known the sixth Guru, Hargobind, and to have been a close associate of the seventh Guru, Har Rāi. Composed some fifty years after the death of Guru Arjun, the *Dabistān* contains a chapter on the *Nānakpanthīs,* although its account of the Gurus' earlier history is drawn from the oral traditions of the time, and is thus contemporaneous with the older *janamsākhīs.* An open-minded writer, Muḥsin Fānī was sympathetic towards the *Nānakpanthīs* and other mystics and devotees of the times, but he is not altogether reliable. One of the early British historians of the Sikhs, J.D. Cunningham, dismisses him as "a gossiping and somewhat credulous person".[184] In this instance, the *Dabistān* relates that the Guru prayed for Khusrau's success, which adds little to the story.

The shock waves and the grief that must have passed through the community of disciples upon the death of their Guru can only be surmised. So suddenly had he been taken from them, and in such a violent manner. Though the Gurus always counselled peace and humility, few disciples could have resisted the initial surge of anger that must have coursed through them. The traditional story relates that Guru Hargobind was instructed to take his seat fully armed, wearing two swords, one the expression of his spiritual power, the other of his temporal power. The woollen rosary worn by his predecessors was replaced by a sword

belt. He made it known to the disciples that henceforth he would accept offerings of horses and arms, rather than money. He trained a small entourage of soldiers, and passed his time in military training and hunting.

Soon after his investiture, Hargobind built the Akāl Takht (*lit.* throne of the timeless One) in Amritsar. It was to be a symbol of his temporal power, built opposite the Harimandir, the symbol of his spiritual power. He also built a small fortress in Amritsar, the Lohgaṛh. *Shabds* in praise of the Guru and *Nām* were replaced with ballads extolling feats of heroism, and spiritual discourses were replaced with plans of revenge and military tactics. The Mughul authorities must have been watched his activities with interest. Eventually, probably as a precautionary measure, and since the fine imposed upon his father had not been paid, Jahāngīr ordered the confinement of the young Guru at his fort at Gwalior and the disbanding of his private army.[185]

It is difficult to imagine a boy of eleven being able to take on all these activities by himself. No doubt, like all young rulers, he had his counsellors, who were the powers behind the 'throne'. Nevertheless, it is clear that with the death of Guru Arjun there was a marked shift in the attitude of the Gurus. Muḥsin Fānī confirms the traditional story:

> Hargobind had many difficulties to contend with. One of them was that he adopted the life of a soldier, wore a sword contrary to the custom of his father, maintained a retinue, and began to follow the chase.
>
> *Muḥsin Fānī, Dabistān 2:273, in HS1 p.64*

But the history of the Gurus and the Sikh community of this period is confused. Modern historians, attempting to align the traditional stories with the *Dabistān* (written shortly after Hargobind's death) have arrived at a number of possible, but conflicting, accounts. Muḥsin Fānī says that the Guru was imprisoned for twelve years, and became a close companion of Jahāngīr (ruled 1605–27), even entering the service of Jahāngīr's successor, Shāh Jahān (ruled 1627–66). However, several children were born to Hargobind during this period, suggesting that he was not imprisoned for more than a year or two, unless at some point he was married and his wife permitted to join him.

There is also no record of Hargobind in Jahāngīr's journals, which is surprising if the two had become close companions, and especially because the emperor lists the names of officials in his court. Nevertheless, there does seem to have been some reconciliation between Hargobind and Jahāngīr because tradition also records that the Mughul authorities handed over the banker, Chandū Shāh, to Hargobind.

The *Dabistān* also relates that upon his release from jail, Hargobind once more built up his private army, many of whom are said to have been Afghan mercenaries:

> The *Guru* had eight hundred horses in his stables, three hundred troopers on horseback, and sixty men with firearms were always in his service.
>
> *Muḥsin Fānī, Dabistān 2:277, in HS1 p.64*

How the disciples of the earlier Gurus responded to all these changes is not recorded. It seems most unlikely that experienced members of the various *sangats* would have switched from a peaceful life of meditation to one of military activism, whatever the depth of their feelings concerning the death of Guru Arjun. Some disciples may have taken to the sword, and Hargobind's new converts would no doubt have been attracted to him because of his new approach. The trusted *masands* must have also felt some sense of confusion when asked to send donations for use in war, rather than funds for the benefit of the *sangat* and for worthy causes. Disciples, too, must have felt uneasy about contributing to this new cause. Perhaps it is from this time that the *masands* began to move towards independence from the central organization, something which had become a 'problem' by the time of the tenth Guru. It is understandable if people discontinue their donations to a cause when the cause changes radically.

The older disciples, who lived close to the new Guru, would hardly have been silent regarding the major shift in emphasis from the inward to the outer. Bhāī Gurdās diplomatically echoes these concerns when he writes of the new Guru's lifestyle:

> The earlier *Gurus* sat peacefully in *dharamsālas:*
> this one roams the land.
> Emperors visited their homes with reverence:
> this one they cast into goal.
> No rest for his followers, ever active:
> their restless Master has fear of none.
> The earlier *Gurus* sat graciously blessing:
> this one goes hunting with dogs.
> They had servants who harboured no malice:
> this one encourages scoundrels.
> Yet none of these changes conceals the truth:
> the Sikhs are still drawn as bees to the lotus.
> The truth stands firm, eternal, changeless:
> and pride still lies subdued.
>
> *Bhāī Gurdās, Vāran 26:24, in SHM p.35*

In the last two somewhat enigmatic lines of this verse, Bhāī Gurdās seems to take refuge in the only consolation he can think of: the Guru knows best. But whether this reflects a common attitude among the disciples is unknown.

Hargobind, however, did not neglect the spiritual side of his duties as a Guru. Especially in the early years, old and experienced disciples such as Bhāī Buddha

and Bhāī Gurdās would have been active in continuing the teachings of the earlier Gurus, as indeed would have the majority of the *mañjīs* and *masands*. After his release from jail, Hargobind is believed to have undertaken extensive *satsang* tours – to Kashmir in the north, and as far east as Pīlībīt in the Kumāon hills. At some time, he also seems to have acquired land in the Shivālik hills, the southernmost foothills of the Himalayas, northeast of Simla. Here, he founded the village of Kīratpur, entrusting its building to his eldest son, Bābā Gurdittā. During the ministry of Hargobind, the number of Sikhs again increased. Now they were not only a visible group, but also a force to be reckoned with. During the time of Jahāngīr's successor, Shāh Jahān (ruled 1628–58), Hargobind's men were also involved in several violent encounters with Mughul troops.

Sikh tradition relates that the time for the peaceful following of the path taught by the first five Gurus was now over. Guru Hargobind, it is said, preached a call to arms that was answered in large numbers by the proud and sturdy men of rural Punjab. Sikh encounters with the Mughuls are commonly portrayed as heroic battles in which the Mughuls invariably come off worse.[186] While armed conflicts certainly became the norm within a few decades, how much this was so in Hargobind's time and how much is the licence of legend, projecting onto the past the ideals of later Punjabi nationalism, is unclear. Certainly, no such major clashes are recorded by the Mughul chroniclers, and any large-scale Sikh uprising would have received significant military attention from the emperor, as it did in future years. In fact, Hargobind himself does not appear to have sought confrontation with the Mughuls, and around 1634, the disturbances became sufficient for him to withdraw to the new Sikh centre of Kīratpur, in the Shivālik hills, where he lived until his death in 1644.

It seems that by Hargobind's time, the succession was expected to remain within the family. But the choice of successor was not obvious. Hargobind had three wives and six children, five of whom were sons. His eldest son, Gurdittā, was apparently inclined towards the *Udāsīs* – an ascetic group who had formed around Srī Chand, Guru Nānak's eldest son. Hargobind is traditionally believed to have favoured Gurdittā as his successor, but Gurdittā died in 1638. Likewise, three other sons died before their father. His remaining son, Tegh Bahādur, who ultimately became the ninth Guru, was considered for the post but, according to tradition, was passed over as being too withdrawn and unworldly. Gurdittā's eldest son is thought to have been hostile to the *Nānakpanthīs,* and so the final choice of successor fell on Gurdittā's younger son, the fourteen-year-old Har Rāi.

Sikh tradition concerning Guru Har Rāi is relatively sparse. He is always said, however, to have been of kind and peaceable disposition, as two traditional stories indicate. One day, while out walking in the fields, his clothing accidentally broke the stem of a flower as he passed. The Guru was so distressed that afterwards he always kept his clothes tucked well in, when walking in the country. It is also said that although, like his grandfather, he enjoyed hunting, he did not like to kill. Instead, he would capture birds and animals, and keep them in a

private zoo. Har Rāi must have been married, for he had two sons, Rām Rāi and Har Krishaṇ, but tradition does not record the name of his wife.

In all, Har Rāi's ministry of seventeen years passed peacefully. But it seems that the Mughuls still kept a watchful and unfavourable eye upon the Sikhs, and soon after his succession, he found it expedient to move from Kīratpur, further into the Shivālik hills. He was afforded protection by the *Rāja* of Bilāspur, and passed much of his period of Guruship near the Shivālik town of Sirmaur, keeping out of the way of the Mughul authorities. Little is known of the development of the Sikh community during this period. Har Rāi himself is believed to have kept to the devotional routine of the early Gurus. He must also have made occasional *satsang* tours of the Punjab plains, for some notable Sikh families date their allegiance to the Gurus to his ministry.

A story of his ministry that is commonly told relates to Har Rāi's association and possible friendship with Dārā Shikoh (1615–59), the eldest son and designated heir of Shāh Jahān. Dārā Shikoh had a deep interest in spirituality and sought the company of holy men. When Shāh Jahān became ill, one of Dārā's younger brothers, Aurangzeb (1618–1707), allied himself with another brother, and challenged Dārā for the throne. Dārā fought two battles against his brothers, but was eventually forced to accede defeat and to flee for his life. On the run, he sought the help of Har Rāi. The nature of the assistance given, if any, is unknown, but after Aurangzeb had consolidated his power – executing, in the process, a son, a nephew, Dārā and another brother, and causing the death of his third brother – he turned his attention to those who had helped Dārā. Har Rāi was therefore summoned to Delhi to explain himself.

Rather than go himself, he sent his eldest son, Rām Rāi, as his representative. Aurangzeb asked Rām Rāi to explain a verse in the *Ādi Granth,* which says that the dead bodies of Muslims become earth that is formed into bricks and fired in a kiln.[187] The Guru is speaking of the transitory nature of human life, which applies to everyone, but Aurangzeb took exception to the expression, *miṭṭī Musalmān* (*miṭṭī* means earth). Regarding it as an insult to Muslims, he asked Rām Rāi to explain it. Rām Rāi extricated himself from the difficult situation by explaining that the actual words were, *miṭṭī beīmān,* turning 'Muslims' into 'the faithless'. Aurangzeb was satisfied, and decided to keep Rām Rāi in Delhi.

On hearing that his son had changed the words of the Gurus to secure his own safety, Har Rāi is said to have decided to pass him over as his successor, in favour of his younger son, Har Krishaṇ. Rām Rāi did his best to regain his father's esteem, but to no avail. In the Mughul court, however, he became the favoured successor, and his desire to be the Guru was encouraged. Managing to win over a section of the Sikh community, Aurangzeb gave Rām Rāi some land in what is now the town of Dehrā Dūn, where he could start a centre of his own. His followers were called *Rāmrāīās,* to which school there are still many adherents. After the death of Guru Rām Rāi in 1687, the centre – with its temples, *gurdwārā* and sacred pool – became known as the Jhaṇḍā Darbār, where an

annual festival, the *Jhaṇḍā Melā,* is still held in memory of the Guru. As recently as 2001, the sacred pool, which had become filled with an accumulation of rubbish, was restored, so that devotees could once more bathe in it.

Rām Rāi's error, especially since he was only a boy at the time and was probably advised as to his reply, does not – in itself – seem to warrant the response it received from his father. It takes more than one such incident to lead to such distrust. Perhaps it was Rām Rāi's character or his association with the Mughuls that led Har Rāi to his decision; or perhaps it was something else entirely. Like so much of the history of the Gurus, the history of the period is told retrospectively, from later tradition.

Whatever the reasons, Har Rāi remained adamant regarding his choice, and shortly before his death, in 1661, he appointed the five-year-old Har Krishaṇ as his successor. History is no clearer regarding Har Rāi than it is of his father. The only tradition that seems certain is that soon after his father's death, Har Krishaṇ was summoned to Delhi, where he lived for just a few years until his early death from smallpox, in 1664. Historians surmise that Aurangzeb was pleased to have both claimants to the Guruship in his safe-keeping. Even Rām Rāi, still a boy, can hardly have pursued his claim to the position without support. But the details of the situation remain a matter of speculation.

Sikh tradition is unanimous that Har Krishaṇ's dying words were, "Bābā Bakāle", indicating that his successor was to be found at the village of Bakālā, situated between Amritsar and the River Beas. The disciples of a mystic generally understand that a Saint or Master is appointed because of his inner spiritual attainment and fitness for the position, not because of any family connections or for any other reasons. While there is always the likelihood that the unworthy ambitions of one or more disciples may make them forget this truth, how far many of the Sikh community of the time had strayed from an understanding of the teachings of the first five Gurus is indicated by what happened next: twenty-two claimants are said to have converged upon Bakālā.

According to the traditional story, the choice of the bewildered Sikhs was simplified by a merchant, Makkhan Shāh, who had nearly lost his life in a storm at sea. When drowning had appeared a certainty, Makkhan Shāh had vowed to give five hundred gold *mohurs* to the Guru if his life should be spared. Evidently, it had been, and going to each of the claimants in turn he offered each just one or two gold *mohurs,* certain that the true Guru would request the correct sum. Sure enough, Tegh Bahādur reminded him of his commitment, and Makkhan Shāh climbed to the rooftops to announce that he had discovered the true successor.

The story is appealing, but not authenticated. It seems more probable – though a speculation – that there were indeed a large number of claimants for the position, and that the elders among the Sikhs chose Tegh Bahādur (1621–75) as the most appropriate for the position. He would have been in his early forties at the time. The area itself was the headquarters of a group started by Har Rāi's

elder brother, Dhīr Mal, who had established himself as a Guru in competition to his brother. While Har Rāi was in the hills, Dhīr Mal had remained in the plains, not far from Bakālā, where he must have attracted a significant following and been accepted by some of the local Sikh community, for a line of Gurus descended from him existed until the twentieth century. So perhaps the followers of Dhīr Mal were also involved in the decision;[188] or maybe Tegh Bahādur was already acting as a spiritual teacher, and Har Krishaṇ was merely indicating that the Sikhs should now go to him for guidance. As previously observed, the history of the Sikhs at this time is difficult to trace with any confidence.

Shortly after his investiture, Guru Tegh Bahādur left for the family property in Kīratpur. Soon after, he bought some land on a hill top near the village of Mākhovāl, five miles away from Kīratpur, and began the building of a village, which he named Ānandpur (*lit.* city of bliss). Probably the same year, in 1665, he set out on an extended *satsang* tour, taking with him his wife and mother, visiting *sangats* as he went. From his writings preserved in the *Ādi Granth* by his son and successor, Gobind Dās, it seems clear that, like the first five Gurus, Guru Tegh Bahādur taught the path of meditation on the mystic Name as the means of liberation from the cycle of birth and death. Like them, he also wrote in the name of Guru Nānak:

> O ignorant man, dread thou sin.
> He who is compassionate to the poor,
> and the destroyer of all dread,
> enter thou His sanctuary....
> Pure is the Name *(Nām)* of God in the world:
> by repeating and remembering it,
> thou shalt wash off all thy sins.
> O man, thou shalt not again attain the human body:
> make some effort now for thy deliverance.
>
> *Guru Tegh Bahādur, Ādi Granth 220, MMS*

> If thou hast not sung the praises of the world Lord,
> thou hast wasted thy life in vain.
> Says Nānak, meditate on God, O man,
> like the way the fish loves water.
> Why art thou engrossed in deadly sins,
> and becomest not detached even for a moment?
> Says Nānak, contemplate thou thy God, O man,
> that death's noose may fall on thee not.
> Thy youth has passed away in vain
> and old age has overcome thy body.
> Says Nānak, dwell thou on thy God, O man,
> thy life is fleeting away....

God is the saviour of sinners, the destroyer of fear
and the Master of the masterless.
Says Nānak, realize thou,
He who abides ever with thee....
The Lord is the giver of all comforts:
without Him, there is no other.
Says Nānak, hearken thou, O my soul,
meditating on Him, salvation is obtained.
Remember thou Him, O my friend,
by contemplating Whom, one is emancipated.
Says Nānak, hearken, O mortal,
thy age is diminishing ever....
O clever and wise man, know that
thy body is made up of five elements.
Be thou sure, O Nānak that thou shalt blend (merge) with Him,
from Whom thou hast sprung.
The Saints proclaim that the venerable Lord
abides in all hearts.
Says Nānak, contemplate thou Him, O my soul,
that thou mayest cross the terrible world ocean.

Guru Tegh Bahādur, Ādi Granth 1426, MMS

Only the Lord remaineth eternally,
and remaineth His Name *(Nām)* and Saints.
Says Nānak, rare is the one
who reflects over (meditates on) the *Guru*'s Word in this world.
The Lord's Name *(Rām Nām)*, of which there is no peer,
I have clasped to my mind.
Such is Thy Name, O Lord,
remembering which my troubles end,
and I am blessed with Thy vision.

Guru Tegh Bahādur, Ādi Granth 1429, MMS

Travelling first to the south, when the Guru arrived in the vicinity of Delhi, Rām Rāi, who was still in attendance at the court, had the Guru arrested as an imposter. According to Sikh tradition more than a hundred years later, as recorded by the British traveller, George Forster, the charge was dropped and he was released on the intervention of the Rāja of Jaipur.[189]

Journeying southeast, through Agra, Allahabad and Vārāṇasī, the Guru came at length to Paṭnā, in Bihar, where he left his mother and wife, who was pregnant, and too far advanced to go any further. Continuing eastwards, he heard in December 1666 that his son, Gobind Dās, had been born. The Guru persevered with his mission, however, going as far as Bengal and Assam, where he

spent some time. Returning from the east, the Guru visited Paṭnā, remaining there for a while, maybe for as long as three years, before returning to the Punjab. Probably, he had received reports concerning Aurangzeb's programme of religious persecution, targeted on Sikhs and Hindus. Temples and *gurdwārās* were being destroyed, Hindus were being forcibly converted to Islam, and Sikh *masands* were being expelled from the cities. Guru Tegh Bahādur must have returned to support the communities of disciples.

What happened next is uncertain. There are at least three more or less conflicting accounts, one Muslim and two Sikh, though none are based on contemporary accounts. Each is told and interpreted differently by different writers, past and present. According to the biased and inaccurate, *Sayyār al-Muta'akhkhirīn,* written by Ghulām Ḥusayn a hundred years after the event, Guru Tegh Bahādur linked forces with a Muslim *faqīr,* Ḥāfiẓ Ādam, and the two moved around the Punjab with a large group of men and women, exacting forced 'donations' – Guru Tegh Bahādur from the Hindus, Ḥāfiẓ Ādam from the Muslims. Muslim newswriters sent reports to Delhi that the increase in their influence could lead to trouble.[190] A warrant was sent to the Punjab, ordering the Guru to report to Delhi to explain himself, and when he did not appear, a small force was sent to arrest him. At first, the Guru could not be found, but was later apprehended in Agra. Sent to Delhi, he was charged with lawlessness, found guilty, and beheaded in Chāndnī Chowk in 1675.

Eliminating bias from the account, it seems probable that Guru Tegh Bahādur was visiting the *sangats* of the Punjab, giving *satsang,* accepting disciples, and encouraging his followers to remain steadfast despite adversity. His spiritual stature and capacity to do this is amply borne out by his writings preserved in the *Ādi Granth.* He also accepted donations, which he would have used for the benefit of the *sangat* in general (free kitchens etc.), as well as the dispossessed, the sick, the needy, and so on. Maybe he did join forces with a *faqīr,* Ḥāfiẓ Ādam, perhaps to demonstrate to the Hindu and Muslim population that all human beings are the same in the eyes of God. No one knows for sure.

From the Muslim point of view, Guru Tegh Bahādur was simply teaching heresy; and many of the reports reaching the ears of the central administration in Delhi were probably distortions put about by malicious and jealous opponents – Muslim, *brāhmaṇ* or alternative Sikh groups, of which by this time there were more than a few. From Aurangzeb's viewpoint, the Sikh 'problem', which had been quiescent for some time, had once more reared its head, and he did not like it. So he put an end to it in the manner to which he was becoming accustomed – he cut off the head!

Sikh traditions tell a very different version of events. According to the commonly related story, Aurangzeb was determined that the *brāhmaṇs* of Kashmir should be converted to Islam, if necessary by force. The *brāhmaṇs* were dismayed, and sent five hundred of their number to Guru Tegh Bahādur, asking him to intercede on their behalf. During the discussions, the young Gobind Dās sub-

mitted that any negotiator sent to Aurangzeb should be a person of great holiness, and who better than his father? Guru Tegh Bahādur agreed, and told the *brāhmaṇs* to inform Aurangzeb that if he could convert the Guru to Islam, then the *brāhmaṇs* would follow suit. Aurangzeb accepted the challenge, and invited the Guru to Delhi. The Guru set out, taking a roundabout route, visiting various *sangats* along the way. Once in Delhi, Aurangzeb insisted that the Guru should convert to Islam. The Guru refused, and was beheaded in Chāndnī Chowk, leaving his disciples with the strong message, "I gave up my head, but not my faith."

There is a second, older Sikh tradition, found in Chaupā Singh's *Rahit-Nāmā,* written in the mid-eighteenth century, about seventy years after the event. According to this account, the Guru was summoned to Delhi to answer various charges brought against him by Dhīr Mal, Guru Har Rāi's elder brother. He went, was cleared of the charges, and returned to the Punjab. Later, however, he was recalled to Delhi, and when he did not appear, he was arrested and beheaded. There is no mention of *brāhmaṇs.*[191] Whatever the truth of the matter, a Guru had again become a martyr to the Sikh cause. But this time, the result would be very different, for the Guru who followed would organize the Sikhs in a way previously unimaginable.

Sometime after his return to the Punjab, Guru Tegh Bahādur had sent for his family, and seen that they were safely installed at Mākhovāl. Probably, he himself also stayed at Mākhovāl for some while, for Sikh tradition indicates that he spent time with the young Gobind Dās. Either from imprisonment in Delhi or previously, at Mākhovāl, he is said to have appointed his son as his successor.

Sikh tradition reaches its peak in the stories and legends surrounding the tenth Guru. In his instance, however, there are some important contemporary sources. Of these, *Bachitar Nāṭak,* an autobiography attributed to the Guru, is perhaps the most significant.

Gobind Dās was nine years old when his father was beheaded. According to Sikh tradition, in the confusion following the beheading, two Sikhs managed to escape with the body and the head. One of the two cremated the body by placing it inside his hut, and then setting light to the hut. The head was delivered to the boy in Mākhovāl (some accounts say Ānandpur), where it was cremated. Gobind Dās asked how many Sikhs had died with his father. The reply was only three: the others had escaped because there was no way of recognizing a Sikh. This traditional reply is significant. Gobind Dās took note of the response, and was later to enshrine immediate recognizability in his definition of a Sikh man.

The feelings of a boy who has lost his father can be imagined. Later, he was to write of the event:

> For their caste-mark and their sacred thread,
> he made the supreme sacrifice in this age of darkness.
> For sake of the saintly,
> he silently gave his head.

For the cause of truth, he suffered martyrdom:
he lay down his head, but not his principles.
Miracles or conjuror's tricks, he refused to perform,
for such are beneath the men of God.
Breaking his earthly pot (body) upon the ruler of Delhi,
he departed for the city of God.
Such was the act of Tegh Bahādur,
something which only he could do.
When Tegh Bahādur passed away,
lamentation rent the world.
From below came cries of anguish:
from heaven, a victor's welcome.

Guru Gobind Singh, Bachitar Nāṭak 5:13–16, DGG p.54; cf. in HS1 pp.74–75, SHM pp.45–46, SHS pp.57–58

The young Guru was raised by his mother. His mother's brother, Kirpal, who seems to have assumed the leading role in the Sikh community at that time, also took great interest in the growing child. Gobind Dās was well-educated, and from the poetry and other writings attributed to him, he seems to have been something of a linguist, learning Sanskrit and Persian, as well as a number of local vernaculars. Kirpal was also particularly keen that the child should receive a good military education, and Gobind Dās's natural talents in this field were encouraged. In *Bachitar Nāṭak,* the Guru describes his evident enjoyment of hunting expeditions in the hills.

While traditional Sikh imagination always depicts Guru Nānak as a saintly old man with a white beard and a rounded tummy, absorbed in meditation, Guru Gobind Singh is the strong, young, handsome, black-bearded, courageous and well-armed warrior; a prince, royally dressed with a plume in his royal turban, mounted on a blue-grey stallion, always ready to fight for a just cause or in defence of human rights. When he sat on his throne or went hunting, a white hawk was always perched upon his left hand.[192] Queries as to how the life of Guru Gobind Singh relates to the teachings of Guru Nānak are met with a simple reply. The Guru is one, but different times and circumstances require different decisions and approaches. If Guru Nānak had been alive in the time of Guru Gobind Singh, he would have made the same decisions.

At that time, the hills were ruled by a patchwork of local chieftains *(rājas)* who made alliances and sometimes fought with each other. This was difficult terrain for the Mughuls to govern from a distance, and sometimes the chieftains would refuse to pay tribute. The Mughuls would then send an army, perhaps from Kashmir in the north, to quell the rebellion. Then new agreements would be made with the Mughuls – until the next rebellion. The hill chieftains continually tested each other's strength and the strength of the Mughuls. When

Mughul determination waned, the hill chieftains waxed bolder. When challenged by a mightier force, they acquiesced.

This was the atmosphere in which the young Guru was raised. In 1685, the chieftain of neighbouring Sirmaur, observing the Guru's gathering strength, invited him to move his headquarters onto his territory, to help him defend it in a fight that was looming with the hill state of Gaṛhwal. The Guru accepted the invitation, and built a fort at Pauntā, on the banks of the River Jumna, on the border of Gaṛhwal and Sirmaur. When the invasion took place, however, the Guru was left on his own to fight the invading army of Gaṛhwal and its mercenaries. The resulting Battle of Bhangānī is vividly described in the *Bachitar Nāṭak*. The Guru emerged victorious, though not without losses, and was established as more powerful than the hill chieftains. Leaving his fort at Pauntā, he returned to Mākhovāl, moving his headquarters to the more strategic site of Ānandpur, which he fortified. During the spring festival and other gatherings, Ānandpur became a rendezvous for heavily armed Sikhs.

Soon after, the Guru's help was sought by the *rājas* of Bilāspur and other neighbouring states in a forthcoming battle against a Mughul army being sent against them for their refusal to pay tribute. The Guru and the allies were victorious at the Battle of Nadaun, but then the chieftains made a deal with the Mughuls behind his back, agreeing to pay tribute after all, perhaps on better terms, or on threat of a greater force being sent against them. The Guru was not impressed.

Aurangzeb was now becoming increasingly concerned about the growing strength of the new chieftain, Guru Gobind Singh, and in 1693, a Mughul army was sent against him. The Guru prepared Ānandpur for a siege, and the army withdrew. A second army sent against him was diverted by a rebellion of other hill chieftains. On this occasion, the Guru successfully helped the rebellion. But when, in 1696, Aurangzeb sent another army, commanded by his son, to subdue the hill *rājas*, the Guru remained in safety behind the walls of Ānandpur.[193]

The Guru's preoccupation with securing his position in the hills meant that Sikh communities in the Punjab plains and elsewhere had been neglected. Following the death of Guru Tegh Bahādur, some, perhaps many, of these had shifted their alliance to other Sikh groups, especially the groups founded by Prithī Chand and Dhīr Mal. The followers of Rām Rāi were still established on the land granted him by Aurangzeb at the hill town of Dehrā Dūn, but they had made little impact on the plains. The *masands*, too, had become a problem. Originally established by Guru Rāmdās as the Guru's trusted representatives, after the death of Guru Arjun, they had become increasingly independent, and sometimes probably corrupt, as one generation passed on the position to the next. Funds were still collected, but may not always have been used for altruistic purposes. By the time of Guru Tegh Bahādur, many had become local mini-gurus in their own right, and there were many places where the Guru himself was not permitted entry, including Amritsar. In short, the Sikh community had become fragmented.

According to the traditional date and the traditional story, in 1699, Guru Gobind Singh decided that the time had come to bring some order and coherence to the Sikh community. He announced that all Sikhs, whatever their persuasion, should come to Ānandpur for the Spring festival, Baisākhī Day, the first day of the Indian New Year. And all should come armed.

Many Sikhs attended. After the morning assembly, the Guru drew his sword and in a loud voice demanded the heads of five Sikhs. The crowd were stunned into silence. Eventually, one man stood up and offered his head to the Guru. The Guru took him behind a curtain; there was the loud thud of a sword striking its target; and the Guru reappeared with a blood-stained sword, awaiting the next volunteer. At length, five Sikhs had disappeared behind the curtain, each meeting the same apparent fate. After the final thud, the Guru appeared once more and, drawing back the curtain, revealed the five Sikhs, alive and well, heads intact. Traditions vary as to what had happened but, thereafter, these five were called the *Pañj Piāre* (Five Beloved).

The Guru then announced that the Five were to be the first members of a new order, the *Khālsā* (the pure), into which he initiated them with the *khaṇḍe dī pāhul* (double-edged sword ritual). Water was place in an iron pot, sweetened with sugar, and stirred with a double-edged sword, to the recitation of *shabds.* Some accounts say that it was sweetened by sweetmeats thrown into it by the Guru's second wife, Mātā Jīto. The *amrit* (blessed nectar) thus prepared was then poured onto his sword, and thence onto the face of each Sikh, five times. Likewise, five times, the *amrit* was poured into their cupped hands, onto their eyes, and sprinkled onto their hair. After this, the Five, who all belonged to different castes, were made to drink from the same bowl, symbolizing their freedom from all castes, and their rebirth into the new fraternity of the *Khālsā.* Tradition goes on to say that the Guru himself requested and received initiation into the *Khālsā* from the Five Beloved.

The Guru then outlined the code of conduct to be followed by members of the new *Khālsā.* So that a Sikh man could be instantly identified, and could never again merge like a coward into the crowd, all men were thenceforth to exhibit five insignia: uncut hair and beard *(kes);* a comb *(kanghā)* to keep their hair tidy; a pair of knee-length breeches *(kachh);* a steel bracelet *(kaṛā)* on their right wrist (perhaps as protection in battle); and a sword *(kirpān),* so as to be always ready for battle. These five insignia became known as the *pāñch kakkās* (five 'k's), *kakkā* being the Gurmukhi letter corresponding to 'k'.

Initiates of the *Khālsā* were also to observe four principles *(rahat):* not to cut the hair on any part of their body; not to drink alcohol, or to smoke or chew tobacco; only to eat the meat of an animal that had been killed with a single blow (unlike the Muslim method of killing an animal by permitting it to bleed to death); and not to molest Muslim women, a code that was later extended to prohibit sexual relations with any woman other than one's wife. Finally, all men were to add Singh (Lion) to their name, and all women were to add Kaur (princess).

Tradition indicates that although some of those present declined to accept the new proposals, many thousands did come forward to accept initiation into the new order.[194] In what was one of the most significant events in Sikh social history, Guru Gobind Singh had effectively declared as invalid all other forms of Sikhism, and all other Sikh organizations. Naturally, this did not mean that the followers of the various Sikh groups would automatically join the new Sikh community, or even agree with him. It must be presumed that many did not, for the descendants of these groups still exist in present times. But the sense of social coherence and safety provided by this new armed and self-supporting brotherhood at a time of persecution and danger, headed by a man whose leadership in battle with the Mughuls had already been proven, must have been held a significant appeal. As the years passed, and troubles with the Mughuls and later with the Afghans became an integral part of Punjabi life, many converted to the new military brotherhood of the *Khālsā*.

The Sikhs were to become soldiers of *Akāl Purukh,* the timeless Lord, fighting for a religious cause. Did this mean that Guru Gobind Singh had changed the teachings of Guru Nānak and the earlier Gurus? His own writings certainly indicate that he was a truly religious man. He neither thought of himself as God, nor wished others to do so, yet he certainly believed that he had a divine mission. In *Bachitar Nāṭak,* he describes how he was called from the heights of the mythological Mount Sumeru to take birth:

> And now my own story I tell,
> how from rigorous austerities I was summoned;
> Called from the heights of Hem Kunt,
> where the seven peaks so grandly pierce the sky.
> *Guru Gobind Singh, Bachitar Nāṭak 6:1, DGG p.54, in SHM p.48*

And likewise, in various other places, he says something of himself and his calling:

> For though my thoughts were lost in prayer
> at the feet of almighty God...
> I was ordained to establish a sect,
> and lay down its rules....
>
> Whosoever regards me as Lord
> shall be damned and destroyed....
>
> I am – and of this let there be no doubt –
> I am but a slave of God, as other men are,
> a beholder of the wonders of creation.
> *Guru Gobind Singh, Bachitar Nāṭak 6:5, 29, 32–33, DGG pp.55–57, in HS1 p.87*

In accord with Guru Nānak, he believed that all things come from God, and to Him return:

> As sparks flying from a flame
> fall back into the fire from which they come –
> As dust rising from the earth
> falls back upon the same ground –
> As waves beating on the shingle
> recede and with the ocean mingle –
> So from God come all things under the sun,
> and to God return when their race is run.
>
> *Guru Gobind Singh, Akāl Ustat 17:87, DGG p.19; cf. in HSI p.88*

Yet his deeds and writings leave little room for doubt that he was a mighty warrior, dedicated to the cause of "extirpating all tyrants":

> I took birth for the purpose
> of spreading the faith,
> saving the holy ones,
> and extirpating all tyrants.
>
> *Guru Gobind Singh, Bachitar Nāṭak 6:42, DGG p.57; cf. in SGS p.296*

In short, Guru Gobind Singh, both by his personal leadership as well as the legends and tradition that developed around him – probably during his lifetime, as well as afterwards – kindled a fire in the hearts of a great many of the Sikhs. He became a symbol of everything for which the oppressed people of the Punjab yearned. Fighting with religious zeal for the cause of justice and their own freedom from tyranny gave them a power that in the end proved invincible. It saw them through the long journey ahead before their goals would be fulfilled, and the many dark hours they had yet to face. Personal, social and political desire had been added to the melting pot, paving the way for the teachings of Guru Nānak and his successors to become the Sikh religion.

Meanwhile, the Mughuls were not happy. The turn of events at Ānandpur, doubtless reported by their network of spies and newswriters, made Aurangzeb feel distinctly uneasy, even though it was on the edges of his kingdom. The local hill chieftains were even less contented. They were aware that if they did not act, the Guru would bring down the wrath of the Mughuls upon them all. The *rāja* of neighbouring Bilāspur therefore laid seige to Ānandpur, but the Guru broke through and defeated the *rāja*'s forces in battle. The ruler then appealed to the Mughuls for help, and they were joined by Vazīr Khān, the Mughul governor of Sirhind, to the south, with additional forces from Lahore, in the west. After a number of skirmishes, in which the Mughuls and the *rāja* of Bilāspur came off worse, the *rāja* made peace with the Guru, who was able to return to

Ānandpur. The course of these events as related by tradition is naturally full of the heroism of the Guru and his followers. There are also a number of variations on the same essential story.

The Guru increased the fortifications of Ānandpur in preparation for the showdown he knew was imminent. In 1704, a combined force of Mughuls and hill chieftains laid seige to Ānandpur, maintaining a tight cordon for several months until the garrison's supplies ran out. Many were the sorties, and many the acts of heroism. Many followers also deserted. Finally, one cold night in December 1704, the Guru and his surviving followers broke out, and managed to escape to a small fort in the village of Chamkaur. Here, they blockaded themselves in, and prepared for their last stand. Soon, they were once more besieged. The Guru's two elder sons were killed, and it seemed that the same fate would meet them all. The Guru's followers, however, insisted that he must be saved. One of them, therefore, who happened to look like the Guru, led a sortie against the enemy, and was killed. And while the enemy were celebrating their victory, the Guru made good his escape.

When the Mughuls realized their mistake, they set off in pursuit of the Guru, and he was again surrounded. This time, with the help of two *pathāns* whom he had earlier befriended, the Guru escaped, disguised as a *pīr* (spiritual Master), the *pathāns* carrying him through the Muslim cordon in a veiled palanquin.

Meanwhile, the Guru's two younger sons and their mother, who had been left behind at Ānandpur, had been taken to Vazīr Khān. Vazīr Khān gave them the usual option of conversion to Islam or execution, and when they refused conversion, he had the two children bricked up in the city walls, and left to die. Their mother is said to have died soon after, of grief and distress. This cruel murder sent shock waves through the people of the Punjab, and is remembered even in present times in Sikh art. Hearing of the death of his wife and children, and in response to a letter from Aurangzeb recommending that he surrender, the Guru replied, "I shall strike fire under the hoofs of your horses, and I will not let you drink the water of my Punjab."[195]

Keeping on the move, the Guru once again gathered his scattered troops around him. Hearing that Vazīr Khān's forces were marching against him, thousands of men, incensed by the murder of the Guru's children, came to the Guru's assistance. The Guru then turned on his pursuers, who were routed. Among those who had joined the battle were forty of those who had earlier deserted him at Ānandpur, all of whom this time lost their lives. Encountering the last survivor, dying on the battlefield, the Guru acknowledged their renewed allegiance and forgave them. Tradition remembers them as the Forty Liberated.

Eventually, the Guru found refuge in Talwaṇḍī Sābo, which came to be known as Damdamā (*lit.* breathing place). Here, he stayed for about a year, and many people in the surrounding areas became his followers at this time. It was also a period of significant literary activity. He visited the family of Dhīr Mal, who possessed a copy of the original *Ādi Granth*. They refused to give it to him,

and so – according to tradition – with the help of his disciple, Bhāī Manī Singh, he dictated the entire *Ādi Granth* from memory, adding the *shabds* of his father, Guru Tegh Bahādur. Modern scholars have pointed out, however, that two manuscripts of the *Ādi Granth* are extant, both containing the writings of Guru Tegh Bahādur, and which predate the tenth Guru's time at Damdamā.[196]

He also went through all his own writings, which were subsequently assembled by Manī Singh as the *Daswan Pādshāh kā Granth* (*lit.* the *granth* of the tenth emperor), commonly known as the *Dasam Granth,* to distinguish it from the *Ādi Granth.* The numerous and varied compositions of the *Dasam Granth* are largely written in Hindi, Persian, Punjabi, and a sanskritized Braj (a western Hindi dialect). A number of Sikh scholars have pointed out that it is most unlikely that Guru Gobind Singh was really the author of all the material attributed to him. There are a number of reasons for this conclusion, among them being that some of the material is erotic and quite unworthy of the Guru; that Bhāī Manī's introductory note to the work does not mean 'written by' the Guru, but 'in the possession of'; and that the Guru is most unlikely to have had the required time at his disposal to have written such a wide and varied body of literature. The Guru is said to have kept up to fifty bards in his entourage, whose writings could easily account for the spurious and varied material.[197]

From Damdamā, Guru Gobind Singh also wrote a letter to Aurangzeb informing him of the actions of Vazīr Khān and others. The Guru's messenger delivered the letter to Aurangzeb in the Deccan, and the emperor was apparently so moved by its contents that he ordered the persecution of the Guru to cease forthwith, and invited him to Delhi. No action, however, was taken against Vazīr Khān. The Guru therefore set out to talk to Aurangzeb personally but, on the way, he heard of the emperor's death. The year was 1707.

The inevitable war of succession between Aurangzeb's sons ensued, in which Guru Gobind Singh assisted Bahādur Shāh by sending a contingent of Sikh horsemen. When Bahādur Shāh had secured the throne, the Guru visited his court in Agra, where he was welcomed and given various gifts.[198] Guru Gobind Singh stayed there four months, before travelling south with the emperor, who had to leave for the Deccan to quell a rebellion led by his brother, Kām Baksh.

While travelling, the Guru continued meeting people, teaching and accepting followers. One day, when camped in the Deccan town of Nandeṛ, the Guru was alone in his tent when two *pathān* assassins entered, and stabbed him in the abdomen. The wounds were stitched up, but the Guru was badly wounded, and the stitches burst a few days later. It has commonly been assumed that the *pathāns* were sent by Vazīr Khān, but since they were immediately killed, the identity of their master was never ascertained. According to the traditional story, realizing that his end was near, the Guru called his followers to him, and told them that the line of Gurus was to end with him. Thereafter, they were to accept

the *Granth* "as the symbol of the Gurus, and their constant guide".[199] Guru Gobind Singh died on October 7th 1708, but his legend lived on:

> O Lord, these boons I ask of Thee:
> Never let me shun a righteous task;
> Let me be fearless when I go to battle;
> Give me faith that victory will be mine;
> Give me power to sing Thy praise;
> And when the times comes to end my life,
> let me fall in mighty strife.
>
> *Guru Gobind Singh, Chanḍī Charitra 231, DGG p.99; cf. HSI p.96*

There is an early source that supplements this traditional story, and gives more body to the Guru's meaning. Sainā̄pati, a poet who had decided not to be initiated into the *Khālsā*, but was nevertheless a follower of Guru Gobind Singh, recalls:

> On an earlier occasion, the *Guru* had been approached by his Sikhs and had been asked what form the (eternal) *Guru* would assume (after he had left this world). He replied that it would be the *Khālsā*. "The *Khālsā* is now the focus of all my hopes and desires," he had declared. "Upon the *Khālsā* which I have created, I shall bestow the succession. The *Khālsā* is my physical form, and I am one with the *Khālsā*. To all eternity, I shall manifest in the *Khālsā*. They whose hearts are purged of falsehood will be known as the true *Khālsā;* and the *Khālsā,* freed from error and illusion, will be my true *Guru*.
>
> "And my true *Guru,* boundless and infinite, is the eternal Word; the Word of Wisdom which the devout contemplate in their hearts; the Word which bring ineffable peace to all who utter it; the Word which is wisdom unmeasurably unfolded; the Word which none may ever describe. This is the light which is given to you, the refuge of all who inhabit the world, and the abode of all who renounce it."
>
> *Sainā̄pati, Gur Sobhā 18:40–43; cf. TSS p.38*

The estimated date of writing is around 1711,[200] and the person writing was a follower of the Guru. What should be made of this report is difficult to say, especially since Sikh faith is largely built upon the simpler tradition. It seems fair to assume, however, that the Guru would have given deep consideration to the matter of succession. Had he wished to do so, he could also have made matters clear by including his opinion in his writings. Perhaps he had intended to do so, but his sudden death prevented him. The report of Sainā̄pati indicates the depth of the Guru's thinking, but it is unlikely that the full story will ever be really known.

After the Gurus

The next two centuries of Sikh history that return this brief account to its starting point must of necessity be foreshortened. Sikh tradition records that shortly before his death, the Guru had met an ascetic, Mādho Dās, in Nandeṛ. Renaming him Bandā, and providing him the necessary seals of authority, Guru Gobind Singh requested Bandā to raise rebellion in the Punjab and especially to rain retribution upon the head of Vazīr Khān. Why the Guru should have entrusted such a mission to someone else, especially a man he had known for such a short span of time is difficult to understand. Bandā was also not without his opponents from within the Sikh community itself, including one of Guru Gobind Singh's widows, Mātā Sundarī.

But this is all a matter of legend and tradition, first written down more than a century after the event. Nevertheless, Bandā raised such a storm of violence in the Punjab that his activities are recorded in the Muslim chronicles. A large number of men rallied to Bandā's call to arms, and Vazīr Khān was vanquished, killed in the battle. His Hindu *dīwān,* who had advised the killing of the Guru's two sons, was taken prisoner and executed. For some time, Bandā led a successful campaign, gaining some notable and heroic victories, but ultimately and inevitably the escalation in size of the Mughul forces became too much for him. The time had not yet come for the overthrow of the Mughuls. In 1716, captive, and led in chains to Delhi, he was given the customary choice of conversion to Islam or death and, together with many of his compatriots, he was executed.

The executions were followed by the attempt to exterminate the Sikhs, at least those of the *Khālsā.* Many were caught and executed; some fled to the northeastern hills or the southern desert; some lived the life of mounted guerrillas, emerging from the jungles to wreak havoc upon the Mughuls, then melting rapidly away before they could be apprehended; some no doubt shaved their beards, and blended back into the general population. The uprising and its legacy indicated the mood of the Punjab, and the power of the tenth Guru's legend. Many heroes emerged among the Sikhs, and their dream of ruling their own country never died, but as yet they had no clear idea of how this was to be accomplished.

The Afghan Wars[201]

By the mid-eighteenth century, Mughul power was on the wane. In 1738–39, Nadir Shāh, the Persian ruler of Kābul, seized the opportunity, and invaded India. Sweeping southwards through the Punjab, he defeated the Mughul army at Karnal, and so reached Delhi. The Mughul emperor, Zakarīyà' Khān (1726–45), submitted to the new ruler. Loaded with booty and with thousands of captives taken into slavery, Nadir Shāh set out for home. But as soon as he crossed into the Punjab, bands of Sikh horsemen fell on his heavily laden baggage train. Night after night, the mounted guerrillas plundered his encampments, giving the Per-

sian no respite until he had crossed the River Indus. On reaching Lahore, Nadir Shāh had asked Zakarīyā' Khān the identity of these enterprising brigands, and where they lived. They are Sikhs, he was told, and they live in their saddles. "Take care," runs the legendary and no doubt apocryphal reply, "the day is not far distant when these rebels will take possession of your country."[202]

The Mughuls took the Sikh threat seriously. In 1746, the location of a large number of Sikhs on the banks of the River Rāvī, north of Lahore, was disclosed to the authorities in Lahore. Lakhpat Rāi, the Hindu chief minister to the governor, assembled a large force and set out in pursuit. The Sikhs retreated northwards, towards the hills, but found their way blocked by the troops of the hill chieftains. Trapped, they were forced to engage in open battle at Kāhnuwān, where Lakhpat Rāi inflicted heavy casualties upon them, an event which the Sikhs remember as the *Chhoṭā Ghallūghārā,* the Lesser Holocaust.

Zakarīyā' Khān had died in 1745, and the failing Mughul empire was once more riven by civil war between the emperor's siblings. One of warring brothers, Shāh Nawāz Khān, had taken Lahore. Putting his brother in jail, he proclaimed himself governor of the Punjab. Nadir Shāh had been murdered in 1747, and to help him consolidate his power, Shāh Nawāz foolishly invited the new warlord in Kābul, Aḥmad Shāh Abdālī, to invade the Punjab. Abdālī was an Afghan, one of Nadir Shāh's more trusted generals, and he readily accepted the invitation. That Shāh Nawāz changed his mind at the last minute made little difference. The Afghan took Lahore, and exacted a heavy tribute for not plundering the city. A month later he moved on towards Delhi where this time his army was defeated, and he turned for home.

Again, the opportunist Sikh horsemen, becoming experienced at this kind of warfare, harried the defeated and retreating Afghan army all the way back to the River Indus, relieving them of their horses and their stores. Abdālī was not amused. But he was also tenacious, and in all he invaded India nine times between 1747 and 1769. This period saw the consolidation of previously local and loosely organized Sikh armies into *misls,* led by their chosen *sardār*. *Misl* is a Persian word, meaning 'alike', but the armies were far from alike, some numbering only a few hundred, others more than ten thousand. Traditionally, there are said to have been eleven or twelve main *misls.* Sometimes, they united under one leader; at other times, they fought independently. It depended on the circumstances.

The Mughuls and the Afghans fought inconclusively for supremacy in North India, sometimes leaving a power vacuum in the Punjab. Accordingly, Sikh power waxed and waned; but the Sikhs still had no coherent political policy, and the soldiers of the *Khālsā* remained as roving bands of guerrillas. On more than one occasion, Abdālī was relieved of large quantities of booty while returning to Afghanistan. In 1757, after heavy losses, angry, frustrated and unable to lay his hands on the elusive Sikhs, he blew up the Harimandir at Amritsar, and filled the sacred pool with the entrails of slaughtered cows.

In 1761, in Abdālī's absence, the combined *misls* under the leadership of Jassa Singh Ahluwalia defeated many of the Afghan garrisons left behind by Abdālī to maintain his authority and government in the Punjab. They took possession of Lahore, and within a few weeks had taken control of a large area of the Punjab. In 1762, Abdālī set out once again, with a huge army, this time with the sole intention of dealing conclusively with the Sikh problem. The Sikhs evacuated Lahore, and Abdālī fell on a large number of them, mostly non-combatants, who were moving southwards. He slaughtered thousands – estimates vary between five and thirty thousand – returning to Lahore with fifty cartloads of Sikh heads, and hundreds of Sikhs in chains. Sikh tradition remembers the massacre as the *Vaḍḍā Ghallūghārā,* the Greater Holocaust. Again, he blew up the reconstructed Harimandir at Amritsar, and once more desecrated the sacred pool.

The same pattern continued for some time. Abdālī would invade and leave his governors in control. On his withdrawal, the Sikhs would again take over. Abdālī tried placating them; he even offered to share power with them, but they declined. In 1769, he invaded India for the last time, but got no further than the River Jhelum in the north before returning home. He died in 1772.

Abdālī had been the bitterest opponent of the Sikhs, yet by effectively destroying Mughul power in the Punjab, he had paved the way for the future. After his final departure, battles and skirmishes with the Afghans continued for some while. At the same time, the independent Sikh *misls,* realizing that power was within their sights but not knowing how to grasp it, began jostling each other for supremacy. In 1783, the English traveller, George Forster, astutely summarized the political situation:

> We may see some ambitious chief, led on by his genius and success, absorbing the power of his associates, display from the ruins of their commonwealth the standard of monarchy.
>
> *George Forster, A Journey from Bengal to England, in HS1 p.184*

That man was Rañjīt Singh, son of the chief of the *Shukarchakia misl,* though at that time, he was only three years old. In 1792, Rañjīt Singh's father died, leaving his twelve-year-old son in control. Within a decade, Rañjīt Singh had secured a cohesive alliance of the many of the Punjab chieftains, had defeated the Afghans, and had been proclaimed Mahārājah of the Punjab, taking his seat in the capital, Lahore. By the end of his reign, through a combination of marriage alliances, intimidation, open warfare (including further Afghan invasions), diplomacy and leniency, together with considerable organizational and leadership skills, Rañjīt Singh had succeeded in uniting the divergent parties of central and western Punjab under his dominion, as well as Multān, Kashmir and Peshawar. Early in his rule, the British appeared on his doorstep, and by means of treaties, he restricted them to Punjab territories south and east of the Sutlej. Largely uneducated, and despite a childhood attack of smallpox that had left him blind in one eye and

with a pock-marked face, he maintained power through the force of his evident character and natural intelligence.

Following the death of Rañjīt Singh, in 1839, after nearly half a century of rule, the old pattern of internecine strife was once more resumed. Instability and confusion increased, and the Sikhs fought two wars with the British, in 1845–46 and 1848–49. Inevitably, the Punjab was finally annexed by the British in 1849, which had the advantage of bringing relative stability to the region for the next century.

When Rañjīt Singh died, four widows and seven 'slave-girls' immolated themselves on his funeral pyre in the Hindu rite of *sātī*. Throughout his rule, although an avowed Sikh, shrewdly calling his government the *Sarkar Khālsā* (government of the *Khālsā*), he remained open-minded and generous towards Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims alike. In fact, many Sikhs see his rule as a reversion to Hindu customs. Certainly, Guru Nānak and the Gurus had condemned the Hindu practice of *sātī*. Nevertheless, many Sikhs took their lead from Rañjīt Singh.

Since the death of Guru Gobind Singh, and despite his efforts, right through until the latter part of the nineteenth century, the Sikh community had been diverse. Those who did not adopt the *Khālsā* identity were aligned to a variety of alternatives, all regarded as equally Sikh as *Khālsā* members. There were the *Sahaj Dhārīs,* who lived more or less Hindu lives, yet acknowledged the *Ādi Granth* as their sacred scripture. The *rahit* of the *Khālsā* was not their way of life. There were the *Udāsīs* (renunciates), the followers of Srī Chand, Guru Nānak's eldest son, living very different lives from the *Sahaj Dhārīs* and members of the *Khālsā*. During his reign, Rañjīt Singh endowed them generously, and they prospered. Likewise, the *Nirmalās* (pure ones), a school of renunciates with an emphasis on traditional learning, fared well under Rañjīt Singh.

Two new schools also came into being during the time of Rañjīt Singh, both back-to-basics responses to the ruler's liberal and tolerant attitude. These were the *Nirankārīs,* who were appalled by the flagrant disregard of Guru Nānak's teachings, and the *Nāmdhārīs,* who advocated a return to essential *Khālsā* principles. There were also many spiritual teachers or *gurus* of varying flavours, who came to the forefront in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a tradition continued to the present day. The *Khālsā* Sikhs were naturally prominent by their external identity, but they were by no means the only Sikhs. Even today, although *Khālsā* Sikhs are now in the majority, and call themselves the 'orthodox', there are many others who quite legitimately call themselves Sikhs.[203]

This, then, was the situation towards the end of the nineteenth century, before the polarization of the Sikh community into the Hindu-oriented *Sanātan Sikhs* and the *Tat Khālsā* (the essential *Khālsā*), with which this short account of Sikh history began.

The story of the Sikh religion and the Sikh people is fascinating because it is of relatively recent origin, and its broad outlines can be sketched with some

degree of certainty. From the days of Guru Nānak and the first five Gurus who taught meditation on the mystic Name of God, through the changes introduced by the later Gurus, to the gradual emergence of Punjab nationalism, from the broad spread of the various Sikh schools to the present dominance of the *Khālsā* Sikhs, the history of an entire religion can be outlined. As a religion, it remains peculiarly Indian in that Sikhs, for the most part, do not proselytize. Consequently, the membership has remained largely Punjabi. Nowadays, there are something in the order of fourteen million Sikhs in the Punjab, and several million more scattered throughout the world in the great Sikh diaspora which accelerated in the second half of the twentieth century.

The Mystic Teachings of the Ādi Granth

The essential Sikh religious teachings are derived from the *Ādi Granth.* The *Ādi Granth* sees God as the loving Father of all humanity. God created human beings. Only later did they create religious, social, caste and colour barriers between themselves. All these distinctions are artificial, unnatural, man-made. Guru Arjun says:

> The one Lord is the Father of all,
> and we are the children of one Lord.
> *Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 611, MMS*

God is the one ultimate Reality – formless, boundless, ever existent, immutable and ineffable. He is both *nirguṇ* (without attributes) and *sarguṇ* (with attributes). When it pleases God, He manifests Himself in the creation in His qualitative or *sarguṇ* form:

> He made the creation, and seated therein,
> He beholds it with delight.
> *Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 463, MMS*

In his *nirguṇ* form, God is simultaneously both transcendent and immanent. The creation is His cosmic play. He pervades it, enjoys it and yet He keeps himself detached from it.

The universe is created, sustained and run according to divine Command *(Hukam).* Whenever God plans to end the creation, He withdraws it into His timeless, formless self and then, if it so pleases Him, He restarts it through His same *Hukam.*

According to the *Ādi Granth,* the soul is of the same essence as God Himself[204] – a drop of the divine Ocean. Reunion of the soul with its Origin is the ultimate goal of human life. It is only in a human form that God can be realized, and everlasting peace can be found.

According to the teachings of the Gurus, birth in human form is both a special privilege and a rare chance for the soul to break free from the cycle of transmigration and secure reunion with its Source. A person who misses this opportunity suffers the agony of birth, death and rebirth.[205]

The cause of all misery in creation is the confinement of the soul to material forms, which serve as a barrier for the soul – to keep it separated from God. This misery lasts for as long as the soul remains attached to the creation and separated from the Creator. The purpose of human life is to reverse this situation: to detach the soul from the world, seek union with God, and let the drop merge back into the divine Ocean and become the Ocean.

In Sikh thought, detachment from the world in no way implies running away from or renouncing the world or neglecting one's duty towards family, society, nation or humanity. The Gurus do not consider renunciation, or the act of physically removing oneself from society, as detachment. They advocate detachment in the midst of attachments, which means that through an inner attachment to the Word *(Shabd),* worldly attachments automatically loosen their hold. Guru Nānak says that, in order to cross the ocean of existence, a person should live in the world like a lotus, which lives in water and yet flowers above the surface, or like a duck, which lives in water and yet flies away with dry wings.[206]

All mystics are in agreement on the need and role of a Guru or spiritual enlightener on the spiritual path. In Sikhism, the Guru enjoys the most esteemed position as it is only with his help and guidance that the individual self can unite with the universal Self. The Guru is the God-realized soul who can liberate other souls from the cycle of transmigration and lead them to the highest state of spiritual enlightenment. Guru Nānak defines a true Guru as one who shows the disciple his real home within this temporary home of the body.[207]

The Guru is capable of uniting the soul with God because he is the representative of God on earth, and is here for the sole purpose of taking souls back to their original home of peace and bliss. Guru Nānak says that God has placed Himself within the Guru; for this reason, the Guru has the power to save "countless millions". He is speaking of the mystical Guru, the inner Guru, the *Shabd:*

> Within the *Guru,* the Creator has placed His own self:
> by the *Guru*'s grace, countless millions are saved.
>
> *Guru Rāmdās, Ādi Granth 1024, MMS*

Guru Arjun says that without the Guru's help, guidance and protection, no one can ever cross this dreadful ocean of existence:

> No one should stray in doubt in this world:
> know that, without the *Guru,* no one can cross the world ocean.
>
> *Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 864, MMS*

The dynamic power of God that creates and sustains the universe is also the current of power that can unite souls with God. In the *Ādi Granth*, it is known by many names. Often, it is referred to as *Nām*, the Name of God:

> By the Name *(Nām)* are sustained all the creatures....
> By the Name *(Nām)* are supported all the worlds and spheres.
>
> *Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 284, MMS*

> Nānak, meditate thou on the Name *(Nām)*:
> so shalt thou obtain glory in the true court.
>
> *Guru Amardās, Ādi Granth 425, MMS*

It is also called the *Shabd*, meaning Word or Sound, for it is also said that the divine Name or Word can be heard within as divine music, experienced through soul consciousness. Guru Amardās says that those who enshrine the Name within are blessed with the rich melodies of *Shabd*.[208]

The Lord functions in the creation in the form of this holy *Shabd* or Word. It is through *Shabd* that souls were separated from their original home to inhabit the creation, and it is through the same *Shabd* that they can be reunited with their Creator through the grace of a *Shabd*-realized Guru. The Guru and the *Shabd* are inseparable because a true Guru is the *Shabd* incarnate and is capable of uniting human consciousness into a oneness with God. Hence, the significance of a true Guru in Sikhism.

From a human viewpoint, the greatest obstacle on the path to God is ego, and the foundations of the path are humility and self-abnegation. Ego is an aspect of the human mind, while the passions of lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride are the five extensions of the ego that together keep the soul trapped in the web of creation. As long as the soul is touched by ego, it is incapable of receiving God's grace, which descends in the form of the Guru's *Shabd*. Paradoxically, both God and the soul live together, in the same body, but because of the ego they have never met or communicated with each other.[209]

It is as though a husband and wife were sharing the same house, yet the wife has never seen the husband nor enjoyed the happiness of union with him. Sikhism believes that it is the veil of ego that keeps the two separated, and that it is only through the Guru's *Shabd* that this veil is shattered and eternal union secured.

According to the *Ādi Granth*, the macrocosm (the entire creation) lies within the microcosm of the human form. Thus the soul sustains the body in the same way as God sustains the entire creation, and whatever is in the creation can also be discovered in the body. The human body is highly esteemed in the Sikh religion because it is regarded not only as a treasure-house of the rarest spiritual gems, but God Himself is understood to dwell within it:

He who is in the universe, that also abides in the body:
and whoever seeks, he finds Him there.

Pīpā, Ādi Granth 695, MMS

Within the body abide all the continents, worlds and the nether regions.
In the body dwells the beneficent Lord,
the life of the world, who cherishes all.

Guru Amardās, Ādi Granth 754, MMS

Within this body-cavern there is an inexhaustible treasure:
in it abides the unseen and illimitable Lord.

Guru Amardās, Ādi Granth 124, MMS

The Lord is ever close at hand:
deem Him not distant.
Under the *Guru*'s instruction, realize God within thee.

Guru Amardās, Ādi Granth 116, MMS

Many aspects of the mystic path explained in the *Ādi Granth* are common to other spiritual traditions. It is said that God pervades the entire universe and sustains it. From a speck of dust to the most intelligent form of life, nothing exists without His divine spark. But this remains an empty statement unless verified by actual experience. It is only after God is realized inside the body that He becomes a cosmic reality. Guru Arjun says that everything is within, not outside. Whoever seeks outside is lost in illusion. But for those who are able to find Him within, with the Guru's grace, He becomes a reality both within and without.[210]

Ever since the soul separated from her Source, she has suffered unending agony, birth after birth. She has lost recollection of her primal home and her divine origin. The sweet memories of life in the Father's house have become buried in matter. Knowledge and intellect, the only tools at the disposal of the soul, are too crude to rend the fine veils behind which the homeward path lies hidden. She cries for help, but no one is there to listen to her cries. She does not know which way to turn and whom to ask. Priests and scholars promise much, but offer little. In fact, they lead her into deeper confusion through senseless rituals and hollow doctrines.

Nothing but pure grace can help her out of her miseries. The Guru is the living symbol of God's grace and compassion for His souls. Guru Arjun invites the soul, assuring her that the One who sent her into the creation is calling her back, to return home in bliss and happiness.[211]

But the Lord helps the soul according to His own plan. He comes down in human guise, as a Guru, to communicate with her and help her out of her sufferings. The one who caused her this pain of separation to begin with, now returns to her as a Guru, with the soothing balm of the *Shabd*.

He projects his love and faith into her heart, wins her confidence and hands her the lifeline of the *Shabd* – the same *Shabd* that brought her down here will put an end to her odyssey in the creation and take her back to her own, real home. This is the essential message of the *Ādi Granth.*

1.12 BUDDHISM

Siddhārtha Gautama (*c.*560–480 BCE), later known as the Buddha (*lit.* an awakened or enlightened one), lived at a formative time in Indian religious history. The *Upanishads* were still being written; the *Mahābhārata* was still a growing legend and had not yet reached its final form; and the *Bhagavad Gītā* and probably the *Rāmāyaṇa,* too, had yet to be composed. It was a period of social and religious change as the Aryan-speaking civilization made further advances into India. Traditional tribal structures were breaking down, new religious ideas were being introduced, and the time was ripe for the formation of new religions and sects. Largely derived from Vedic traditions, many of these movements were reactions to the hold of the *brāhmaṇs,* the priestly class who made a living from officiating over Vedic rituals.

Like many other great mystics, the Buddha probably never sought to found a religion. Nevertheless, after his death, Buddhism spread throughout most of Asia, numbering today something in the region of 300 million adherents.

According to the traditional story, Siddhārtha was born into a high princely family in Lumbinī village, in the foothills of the Himalayas, north of the present Indian state of Bihar. He was the son of Shuddhodana, king of Kapilavastu and Māyā, princess of Devadaha. At the age of sixteen, he was married to a girl of high birth, Yashodharā.

Although material wealth and power were at his disposal, the young prince was deeply moved by the sight of suffering and, leaving his kingdom, he renounced the comforts of princely life in search of lasting peace and the cessation of suffering. After six years of strenuous search and painful struggle, trying various practices and finally deep meditation, it is said that he received enlightenment.

The Buddha did not permit his disciples to record his teachings in writing, and it was not until long after his death that they were written down. As a result, there is no certainty over what his original teachings were, and this has remained a subject of some debate. As an essentially mystical tradition, however, the strength of Buddhism has always lain in its emphasis on contemplation, founded on a high level of moral conduct, and centred on the teachings of the Buddha himself.

It is generally believed that the Buddha based his teaching on four 'Noble Truths': that suffering exists, that suffering has a cause, that suffering can be overcome, and that there is a Way to overcome suffering.

Firstly, he pointed out that all beings – human, animals, ghosts, gods and others – are in a state of suffering *(dukkha)*. They have no option but to face miseries and troubles of every kind, including disease, old age and death:

> Now, this is the noble truth concerning suffering. Birth is painful, decay is painful, death is painful, union with the unpleasant is painful; painful is the separation from the pleasant, and any craving that is unsatisfied, that too is painful. In brief, the five aggregates (the *skandhas* of body, feelings, perception, will and reason) which spring from attachment are painful.
>
> *Foundation of the Kingdom of Righteousness 5, in IP1 p.362*

All beings are caught up in the whirlpool of *saṃsāra*, wandering in the cycle of birth and death according to their actions *(karma)*. *Saṃsāra* exhibits three essential characteristics: impermanence *(anichcha)*, the lack of a permanent sense of self *(anattā)*, and – as a consequence – suffering *(dukkha)*:

> All created things are transitory *(anichcha)*.
> When, by wisdom *(paññā)*, a person realizes this,
> then he is not troubled by suffering *(dukkha)*.
> This is the path to purity.
>
> All created things are full of suffering *(dukkha)*.
> When, by wisdom *(paññā)*, a person realizes this,
> then he is not troubled by suffering *(dukkha)*.
> This is the path to purity.
>
> All aspects of phenomenal things are without soul *(anattā)*.
> When, by wisdom *(paññā)*, a person realizes this,
> then he is not troubled by suffering *(dukkha)*.
> This is the path to purity.
>
> *Dhammapada 20:5–7*

Secondly, the Buddha taught that suffering has a cause. Simplistically, the root cause is desire *(taṇhā)*, but a sequence of twelve causal links *(nidāna)* that lead to suffering are enumerated, beginning with *avidyā* (spiritual ignorance), leading through various intermediate stages, including desire, and culminating in rebirth followed by the inevitable death. *Avidyā* is the root cause. The false 'I' that is the central support of individual being is the product of *avidyā* and *karma*. It is ignorance to assume as real that which is not, and it is from ignorance that desire and craving for life arise.

Thirdly, he taught that since suffering has a cause, it can also be overcome. Complete conquest of suffering leads to the blessed state of *nirvāṇa*, which confers permanent release from *saṃsāra* and the cycle of rebirth.

Fourthly, he said, there is a Way by which suffering can be overcome, and *nirvāṇa* attained. The Buddha called this Way the Noble Eightfold Path, the Golden Mean, or the Middle Way or Path. In essence, like other spiritual paths, it consists of meditation or contemplation, built on the foundation of a moral and ethical life, leading to enlightened wisdom *(paññā)* and *nirvāṇa:*

> There are two extremes, O *Bhikkhus,* which the man who has given up the world ought not to follow – the habitual practice, on the one hand, of those things whose attraction depends upon the passions, and especially of sensuality – a low and pagan way of seeking satisfaction, unworthy, unprofitable, and fit only for the worldly minded – and the habitual practice, on the other hand, of asceticism or self-mortification, which is painful, unworthy and unprofitable. There is a Middle Path, O *Bhikkhus,* avoiding these two extremes, discovered by the *Tathāgata* – a Path which opens the eyes and bestows understanding, which leads to peace of mind, to the higher wisdom, to full enlightenment, to *nirvāṇa.*
>
> What is that Middle Path, O *Bhikkhus,* avoiding these two extremes, discovered by the *Tathāgata* – that Path which opens the eyes and bestows understanding, which leads to peace of mind, to the higher wisdom, to full enlightenment, to *nirvāṇa?* Verily, it is this Noble Eightfold Path; that is to say: right understanding, right attitude, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right contemplation.
>
> *Foundation of the Kingdom of Righteousness 1–4; cf. SHI p.189*

It is by following this path that the seeker attains detachment and illumination, making him the best of all "two-footed beings" (men and gods):

> Of paths, the eightfold is the best,
> of truths, the four sayings;
> Of *dharmas* (virtues), detachment is the best;
> of two-footed beings, he who is endowed with sight.
>
> *Dhammapada 20:1*

The goal is thus spiritual enlightenment through self-mastery. He who breaks all bondage becomes enlightened. He who masters himself and eliminates all desires is the true ascetic. Such a one "wields mastery over his mind, he does not let the mind wield mastery over him".[212]

The Buddha's silence on the questions of God and soul, together with his great emphasis on the fact of suffering, has sometimes led to his teaching being mistakenly understood as pessimistic and atheistic. But he laid emphasis on suffering only to point out to people that they are suffering, and how they could obtain freedom from it. And he was generally silent about God and the soul because, as a practical teacher, he was intent on showing people how to experi-

ence truth for themselves, rather than simply asserting it or describing what could not be described. If ignorance was the cause of suffering, knowledge would necessarily eliminate it. But the knowledge required was not intellectual learning or doctrinal belief or any form of derived knowledge, but personal experience:

> Now, O monks, are you going to say that we respect the Master and, out of respect for him, we believe this and that? You must not say that. Is it not so that you will only accept as true that which you have seen, known and apprehended for yourselves?
>
> *Majjhima Nikāya 1; cf. in IP1 p.432*

Liberation is the result of overcoming selfishness and destroying the illusion of the ego, and Truth can only be known through *shraddhā* (faith), *darshana* (vision) and *bhāvanā* (meditation). This goal, which the Buddha set before his followers, he called *nirvāṇa*, which literally means 'blowing out' (as of a candle) or 'becoming cool'. 'Blowing out' refers to the extinction or the disappearance of individuality. 'Becoming cool' implies the dying out of all passions and cravings.[213] But although the Buddha regarded *nirvāṇa* as the goal of spiritual endeavour, no record exists of how he understood it. Consequently, different schools have given different interpretations. To some, *nirvāṇa* is simply extinction, a state of vacuity. Others, points out Radhakrishnan, have interpreted *nirvāṇa* as so pleasurable a state that the Buddha has been charged with hedonism.[214]

Both would appear to be a misunderstanding of the Buddha's teaching. The Buddha did not define *nirvāṇa* because a definition would be limiting. A state beyond thought and language cannot be described, but he does not refer to a negative state of vacuity. He is referring to a higher wisdom, full enlightenment, peace – and freedom:

> It is through not understanding and grasping four truths, O brethren, that we have had to run so long, to wander so long in this weary path of transmigration – both you and I! And what are these four? The noble conduct of life, the noble earnestness in meditation, the noble kind of wisdom, and the noble salvation of freedom. But when noble conduct is realized and known, when noble meditation is realized and known, when noble wisdom is realized and known, when noble freedom is realized and known – then is the craving for existence rooted out, that which leads to renewed existence is destroyed, and there is no more birth.
>
> *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta 4:2, in SHI p.185*

Mystically, *nirvāṇa* is better understood as the culmination of inner concentration and contemplation, a blissful state beyond the reach of suffering, birth

and death. In *nirvāṇa,* all human passions and weaknesses cease to exist. It is a state beyond time and origination; the peace attained is eternal; and it can be attained in this life. But since it is indescribable, the Buddha used negative terms to describe it – freedom from misery, from death, from ego, and so on. The "noble wisdom" is a transcendental state, beyond mind and intellect, in which no subject-object relationship exists. It is, in essence, the mystical state.

Although the Buddha did not speak of a permanent self, he did not deny its existence, either. What he denied was the reality of the human ego. He did not go further and declare the existence of the self because he knew that people would mistake it for the ego. More than a hint of this is present in his recorded teachings:

> We read in one of the Buddhistic scriptures how, when a monk asked Buddha if there is a self, the Master maintained silence. When asked if there is no self, he again maintained silence. Then, when his disciple Ānanda asked why he maintained silence in the face of these opposing questions, he explained that if he had declared that there is a self, the monk might have regarded the impermanent element as permanent, and if he had replied in the negative, the monk might have thought that 'belief in annihilation' had been confirmed.
>
> *Swāmī Prabhavānanda, Spiritual Heritage of India, SHI p.182*

Similarly, the Buddha's silence about God is not to be taken as a sign of atheism or agnosticism. His entire teaching leading to the goal of *nirvāṇa* would fall to pieces if a permanent Reality were denied. Perhaps it was for this reason that the Buddha did occasionally break his silence:

> There is an Unborn, an Unoriginated,
> an Unmade, an Uncompounded;
> Were there not, O mendicants, there would be no escape
> from the world of the born, the originated,
> the made and the compounded.
>
> *Udāna 8:3, in SHI p.181*

Despite their essential simplicity, the Buddha's teachings, like those of the 'founders' of most religions, have been subject to varying interpretations. The result has been a number of schools, further coloured by the religion and culture of the various countries where these schools have become established.

Although the early history of Buddhism is more a matter of tradition than science, it seems clear that these divisions began at a very early stage. It is said that soon after the death of the Buddha, his followers held a council to decide on the direction they should take, and to organize the teachings of their Master into

a body of doctrine. A second council was held a hundred years later in which certain doctrines were condemned. And a third council was convened around 250 BCE by the Emperor Ashoka in an unsuccessful attempt to iron out various doctrinal differences between the schools.

One of the most significant of these early divisions was between the *Sthaviravāda* (the Way of Elders) and the *Mahāsanghika* (the Great Council). The *Sthaviravāda* included such divisions as the *Sarvāstivāda* and the *Theravāda* with their respective scriptural canons in Sanskrit and Pali. Today, *Theravāda* is the sole remaining school representing the Way of the Elders. It is the prevalent form of Buddhism in Thailand, Burma and Sri Lanka, where its preservation can be traced to the efforts of Ashoka. Ashoka was a convert to Buddhism and is said to have sent missionaries to these countries, as well as to Alexandria, the international Egyptian city founded by Alexander the Great. It is also believed that Ashoka sent his own son to Sri Lanka, where Buddhism prospered, as it does to this day.

In modern times, Buddhism is generally regarded as falling into two main schools, *Hīnayāna* (lesser or inferior vehicle) and *Mahāyāna* (greater or superior vehicle). *Mahāyāna* was a later development, and it was this school which disparagingly dubbed earlier Buddhism, *Hīnayāna*. *Hīnayāna* or *Theravāda* emphasizes personal salvation or *nirvāṇa*. *Mahāyāna* takes the salvation of all sentient beings as its goal, and looks upon the concern for personal liberation as a lower ideal, containing an element of selfishness. There are also differences of opinion concerning the deification of the Buddha. *Hīnayāna* considers his body to have been mortal, like everybody else's, while *Mahāyāna* regards him as an immortal, superhuman being. Likewise, other differences exist concerning the nature of the void *(shūnyatā)*, and so on.

As *Mahāyāna* developed, a number of philosophers and thinkers provided their own input, forming further schools of thought. Among the most well known of these philosophers is Nāgārjuna, the second-century CE founder of the *Mādhyamika* school. Literally, *Mādhyamika* means 'relating to the middle', but it is not to be confused with the Middle Way as propounded by the Buddha, which had an ethical meaning, to avoid mortification as well as hedonism. The 'middle view' of *Mādhyamika* is a metaphysical concept, suggesting that all knowledge, either perceptual or intellectual, is relative, and maintaining that the world is consequently neither real nor unreal. Extreme logical analysis is employed in the attempt to prove that the essential truth is *shūnyatā* (void), a state often translated as 'emptiness' or 'nothingness', but probably better defined as a state in which the mind and intellect are transcended, where the distinction between subject and object, between knower and known, no longer exists.

Another school, *Vijñānavāda* (Way of Knowledge) arose during the fourth century CE from the teaching of two brothers, Asanga and Vasubandhu, who taught that the only reality is the mind, and that nothing exists outside of it.

Mādhyamika and *Vijñānavāda* were to play significant roles in the development of Buddhism outside India. In India itself, with the development and popularity of magical, occult and yogic Tantrism, a form of Tantric Buddhism arose, with beliefs and practices similar to those of yogic Tantrism. Tantric Buddhism, in the form of *Vajrayāna* (The Way of the Thunderbolt) was introduced into Tibet in the seventh century CE, where it became established, but in India it heralded Buddhism's last phase. Absorption into Hinduism and persecution by the Muslim invaders meant that by the thirteenth century, Buddhism had become all but extinct.

Outside India, *Mahāyāna* Buddhism spread to what are now Vietnam, Korea, Japan, Taiwan, China and Tibet, being moulded into new forms by integration with various aspects of local religion and culture. Its fortunes, however, have varied according to the changing political circumstances of the various host nations. In China, for instance, Buddhism once enjoyed considerable status, power and wealth. During the ninth century CE, however, in a short but decisive imperial purge, many temples were destroyed, monastic properties confiscated, and thousands of monks stripped of their religious duties. In subsequent centuries, Chinese Buddhism did regain some of its lost ground, but never returned to its former status.

Buddhist sacred literature consists of hundred of works, originally transmitted in both oral and written forms, and now preserved in four principal languages: Pali, Sanskrit, Chinese and Tibetan. Buddhists classify this vast literature in several ways, of which the Theravadin division of the Pali texts into the *Tripiṭakas (Three Baskets)* is perhaps the most significant. Said to have been committed to writing in Sri Lanka during the first century BCE, and comprising the *Theravāda* Pali Canon, these three collections of texts are: the *Suttapiṭaka,* consisting of discourses, sayings and conversations attributed to the Buddha, including the well-known *Dhammapada,* together with stories about him; *Vinayapiṭaka,* which covers monastic discipline; and *Abhidammapiṭaka,* which contains scholarly elaborations on matters of ethics and the metaphysical elements of human psychology and Reality. A large number of semi- and non-canonical texts are also extant in Pali, together with an even greater collection of commentaries.

Theravāda was only one of several other *Hīnayāna* sects to compile its own *Tripiṭakas* in Sanskrit. Today, these Sanskrit texts survive only as fragments, but in the Chinese and Tibetan canons, large sections are preserved as translations, together with a vast storehouse of additional texts of considerable variety. These texts include translations of the *Mahāyāna Sūtras* (including the *Avatamsaka, Mahāparinirvāṇa,* the Lotus and the Pure Land *Sūtras,* together with the Perfection of Wisdom literature), original Chinese and Tibetan works, *Tantras,* philosophical treatises, biographies, collections of legends, and instruction manuals for the correct performance of rituals.

1.13 Taoism

Taoism, regarded as the greatest Chinese philosophical tradition after Confucianism, was not founded nor has it been practised as an organized religion *per se*. It is a way of life whose intention was and is to increase awareness of the fundamental Reality underlying all things. This Reality or Power is held to be beyond any name or description that can be applied to It; but since effective human communication requires names, It was referred to as *Tào*, meaning Way or Path. In a mystic context, *Tào* means both the Way, as the dynamic creative Reality of life, as well as the journey or process by which this underlying Principle or Reality can be experienced.

Taoism is believed to have originated informally among unnamed hermits who practised the Way, either in solitude or perhaps in small groups in isolated hermitages, among the beautiful and serene extremities of the many rugged mountain ranges which crisscross China. Taoism has no formal history during this period, and its beginnings are generally traced to Lǎo Tzu (*c*.604–531 BCE), who wrote the classical Taoist treatise, the *Tào Té Chīng (Classic of the Way and Its Power)*. Lǎo Tzu, whose given name was Lǐ Ěrh, died when Confucius (551–479 BCE, the latinized form of K'ŭng Fū Tzu) was a young man. Traditionally, the origins of Taoism are also linked to the mythical Yellow Emperor, who dates back to 2500 BCE.

Primarily as a result of the popularity of the *Tào Té Chīng*, as well as the subsequent expansion on these terse and cryptic verses by the sage Chuāng Tzu (*c*.369–286 BCE) in the *Book of Chuāng Tzu* (or just the *Chuāng Tzu*), Taoism gradually spread into the villages and cities. In time, Taoism was embraced by local rulers as well as the imperial courts, gradually becoming widespread among the people. This early period of Taoism has been called classical or philosophical Taoism.

Tào, as the creative Principle of all things, is not regarded as a divine being or entity, but rather as a dynamic power, a consciousness that permeates all things, whether seemingly good or evil, important or insignificant. Over time, the *Tào* has also been called *T'iēn* (Heaven) and *Lǐ* (Principle, Rule), but Lǎo Tzu observes that the real *Tào* is beyond descriptions and names:

> The *tào* that can be expressed is not the eternal *Tào;*
> The name that can be defined is not the unchanging Name.
>
> *Lǎo Tzu, Tào Té Chīng 1, WLT p.41*

Although Lǎo Tzu has remained the most revered mystic or sage of Taoism, there is some debate among historians as to whether he ever existed. It is suggested that he may have been a fabrication of unknown monks and recluses living among the mountains in order to draw attention away from themselves. In com-

mon with many mystics and revered sages of the past, his life story is hedged about with legend. It is said, for instance, that he spent eighty-one years in his mother's womb, and was thus considered old when he was born. Hence the name Lǎo Tzu, which literally means 'old sage'.

According to Taoist tradition, Lǎo Tzu was a minor government official who, in his later years, seeing the increasing corruption around him, decided to escape the world of men and move to the mountains in order to devote himself wholly to the Way. Arriving at the border of the province of Hónán on the western frontier of China, and riding on an ox (as he is traditionally depicted in paintings and sculptures), Lǎo Tzu encountered a border official who not only happened to be a follower of *Tào,* but had seen in a vision that a great sage would be passing his way, in search of seclusion. Recognizing him, the official begged the sage to write down his teachings for the benefit of humanity before retiring to the wilderness. Lǎo Tzu agreed, and there and then he sat down and wrote out the 5000 Chinese ideograms (later organized into 81 verses) that constitute the *Tào Té Chīng.* Then he continued on his way, never to be seen again. The *Tào Té Chīng* is one of the most studied Chinese books. Over 700 scholars have written commentaries on the work. It is also the Chinese classic most translated into other languages. There is a traditional belief among Taoists that the *Huà Hú Chīng (Classic on Conversion of Barbarians),* an elaboration of the teachings given in the *Tào Té Chīng,* probably written around 300 CE, was also written by Lǎo Tzu, or perhaps by his disciples.

One of the foremost admirers of Lǎo Tzu and one of the most well known sages of classical Taoism was Chuāng Tzu (*c.*369–286 BCE), also known as Chuāng Chōu, who lived two hundred years after Lǎo Tzu. Considered a primary commentator on classical Taoism, and the torchbearer of Taoist tradition during his time, Chuāng Tzu is reputed to have been married, living a simple, meagre existence while holding a small administrative post in the state of Sùng. Chuāng Tzu sought to amplify the simple teachings of Lǎo Tzu during a time of great civil war and anarchy. While Confucianists and other prevalent philosophical schools sought answers to the troubles through plans of moral action, Chuāng Tzu's answer to all problems was simple: free your self. His teachings echo those of the *Tào Té Chīng:* that man is the creator of his own suffering, that his miseries come from expectations and preferences, rather than dispassionately accepting life as it comes and raising one's consciousness in order to experience the oneness of *Tào.*

It is clear from his many parables that Chuāng Tzu was a critic of intellectualism, materialism and the calculated moral virtues as propagated by the Confucian school of thought. Like his predecessor, Lǎo Tzu, he maintained that living in the Way is the natural source of all virtue. Lǎo Tzu and Chuāng Tzu are together known as the founders of classical Taoism.

The *Tào Té Chīng* consists of rather short abstruse phrases and sayings, stressing simplicity, tranquillity, genuineness and reserved behaviour. In his

book, the *Chuāng Tzu*, the author echoes the same mystical teachings, but in an aesthetic and freely imaginative style using parables, allegories, dialogue and short narratives to make his points. He also makes use of many historical, mythical and completely fictional characters, including animals and insects. Some stories criticize the moral virtues as propagated during his time by the Confucians, often employing the great Chinese moralist Confucius himself as well as other famous Chinese philosophers including Lǎo Tzu, to point out the misguidedness of this intellectually based morality. Chuāng Tzu's characters often switch roles; thus, Confucius is sometimes portrayed as an enlightened Taoist imparting jewels of mystical wisdom. In all, Chuāng Tzu emphasizes the loftiness and transcendental aspects of the ideal state of mind needed to experience the mystical reality of *Tào*. The *Chuāng Tzu* consists of thirty-three chapters, the first seven, the 'inner books', being considered the work of Chuāng Tzu himself, while the fifteen 'outer chapters' and eleven 'miscellaneous chapters' are believed to have been written by his disciples.

Together, Lǎo Tzu and Chuāng Tzu are regarded as the figureheads of classical Taoism. Their two books, together with the writings of Lièh Tzu, collected together in the *Lièh Tzu*, remain the primary sources of classical Taoism. Lièh Tzu, a Taoist philosopher of uncertain date, clearly predated the *Chuāng Tzu*, because he is frequently mentioned there. But little is known of him except the book that bears his name, and – like Lǎo Tzu – some scholars have also doubted his existence.

Confucianism and classical Taoism were the two main branches of Chinese philosophy from the time of Confucius (551–479 BCE) to the beginning of the Christian Era (*c*.600–100 BCE). Although possessing some elements of religion, the more popular Confucianism was primarily concerned with the more practical side of life: morality, social conduct, institutions, customs and so on. So while Confucianism was heralded for its moral and societal doctrines, Taoism was always a mystic philosophy, existing only for the purpose of spiritual development. The two were not incompatible, however, and both were often cultivated by the same individual, whether ruler or common man. Often acting as a bridge between Confucianism and Taoism was the *Ì Chīng (Classic of Change)*, the well-known oracle with its combination of metaphysical teaching and everyday advice. The Taoists maintained that the fixed standards and rules of Confucianism only became necessary when the natural simplicity and innocence of the Way was forgotten. They taught that the Way, when properly cultivated, would automatically lead to harmonious action. In fact, they contended that the laws and doctrines of Confucianism only made life more difficult. What is needed is a life of simplicity and dedication to the experience of *Tào*. Then moral behaviour would arise naturally:

> Banish wisdom, discard knowledge,
> and the people shall profit a hundredfold;

Banish humanity, discard justice,
and the people shall recover love of their kin;
Banish cunning, discard utility,
and the thieves and brigands shall disappear.
As these three touch the externals and are inadequate,
the people have need of what they can depend upon:

Reveal thy simple self,
embrace thy original nature,
check thy selfishness,
curtail thy desires.

Lăo Tzu, Tào Té Chīng 19, WLT p.119

In fact, the pursuit of learning as the final goal will take a person away from the *Tào:*

He who pursues learning will increase every day;
He who pursues *Tào* will decrease every day.
He will decrease and continue to decrease,
till he comes to non-action;
By non-action everything can be done.

Lăo Tzu, Tào Té Chīng 48, TTCT p.63

In Its purest sense, the *Tào* does not require worship, being unaffected by praise or criticism. The practitioner does not implore *Tào* for Its favour, but endeavours to mould himself to Its harmonious workings. The practitioner also makes no outward show of his practice, keeping a great deal hidden from the gaze of others – hence some of the reason for the reclusive life of many Taoists of today. Moreover, there is no point in revealing to others what they are not ready to understand and respect:

When those who know me are few,
eventually I am beyond all praise.
Therefore, the sage wears clothes of coarse cloth,
but carries jewels in his bosom;
He knows himself, but does not display himself;
He loves himself, but does not hold himself in high esteem.

Lăo Tzu, Tào Té Chīng 70, TTCT p.85

The typical student of classical Taoism performs various practices, primarily to simplify his needs and to purify the body. The essential purpose is to concentrate the mind in order to remove the veils of attachment, belief, likes and dislikes – these being blockages to the awareness of the omnipresent *Tào*.

Around the second century CE, classical Taoism *(Tào Chiā)* gave birth to religious Taoism *(Tào Chiào)*. Up to that time, Taoism had been practised mostly by recluses, and in the confines of hermitages. Over time, however, these practices became more formalized and ritualized. Ornate temples were constructed and a priesthood came into being for the purpose of conducting rituals and ceremonies. A pantheon of gods was also established and worshipped, the belief being that these deities controlled everything from universal spiritual forces to the most mundane functions of the human body and the physical universe.

Religious Taoism was primarily concerned with the creation of an immortal body through occultism, meditation, breathing, sexual practices, ancestor worship and other rituals. Householders were encouraged to adopt these practices with promises of a prolonged life and, if they were sufficiently diligent, immortality. Chinese legends abound with humans becoming immortal beings *(Hsiēn)* and, while dwelling in heavenly paradises, having an occasional hand in the affairs of earth.

The practices used to attain this immortality appear to have been a form of occult meditation or alchemy. Originally, these began as meditative practices involving contemplation on different energy centres in the body, on the breath, as well as on the ethereal gods and deities who were believed to dwell within the body. Strict dietary and lifestyle restrictions were also a part of the regime. Eventually, a 'sacred embryo' would be formed, which would not only help to preserve the body, bestowing enhanced health and longevity, but could ultimately transform the physical body into pure spirit – an immortal being or *Hsiēn*. When success was attained, the spirit would then 'rise to heaven in broad daylight'. This practice was known as inner alchemy *(nèi tān)*. Eventually, however, it became externalized, being replaced in popularity with outer alchemy *(wài tān)*. Outer alchemy involved the preparation and ingestion of herbal or chemical compounds, which, it was believed, if practised properly, would also confer immortality.

In this way, religious Taoism slowly turned the simple spiritual truths of Lăo Tzu and Chuāng Tzu into formalized religious and occult practices. Classical Taoism was not altogether submerged, however, for a small movement, the *Hsüán Hsüéh* (*lit.* mystical learning), flourished during the third to fifth centuries CE. *Hsüán Hsüéh* attempted to revive classical Taoism by re-emphasizing the transcendental nature of *Tào*. *Tào* was regarded as the 'mystery of mysteries', and the followers studied the texts of classical Taoism, especially those of Lăo Tzu and Chuāng Tzu. Scholars of this system also developed and refined a practice known as 'pure conversation *(ch'īng t'án)*', which was a way of presenting the teachings through entertaining dialogues and metaphors. Additionally, various insightful commentaries on the *Tào Té Chīng* and the *Chuāng Tzu* were written. The students of *Hsüán Hsüéh,* however, were influenced by Confucianism, which was widely practised at the time, and this is to some extent reflected in their commentaries. In modern times, scholars and historians refer to this movement as Neo-Taoism.

One further influence was to have a significant bearing on the decline of Taoism. In 2 BCE, a foreign envoy from India instructed a Chinese official on the meaning of a Buddhist scripture. From this point on Buddhism gradually gained ground in China, although the influence was two-way, with Chinese Buddhism adopting much from Taoism. In fact, the *Ch'án* school of Buddhism (known in Japan as Zen) originated in China as a combination of Buddhist and Taoist thought. Over the ensuing centuries, Taoism and Buddhism each, by turns, became the state religion. But among the general population of China, forms of Taoism, Buddhism, Confucianism and various other beliefs have typically been practised together. Throughout the centuries, however, the fundamental goal of Taoism has always been the return to a full consciousness of the abiding, all-supreme creative Power known as *Tào*.

1.14 NATIVE CULTURES

The native or indigenous peoples of Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Indonesia, the Pacific Islands, North, Central and South America, and other areas of the world are generally characterized – before the arrival of Europeans – by the absence of reading and writing. The overall result has been that whatever is known to posterity of their spiritual and religious lives has been seen and recorded through the eyes and pens of European observers. Moreover, those early Europeans who had any time at all for the native people whose lands they had appropriated were usually more interested in converting them to a belief in Christianity and European values than in truly understanding them for who and what they were.

In many instances, too, the assimilation of elements of European beliefs and culture (acculturation) took place quite rapidly, obscuring the original religious and spiritual atmosphere. In only a few instances have the native people been able to speak for themselves, and that too only after acquiring some degree of European education and culture. Nevertheless, a study of the spirituality of the peoples whose way of life has been so precipitously interrupted by the European influx reveals some interesting common features. Varying from people to people, these include: the belief in a Great Spirit or God, the existence of other realms of being, the tradition that certain gifted and suitably trained individuals (sometimes called shamans) can visit those realms, spiritual life in those realms after death, and the need for an ethical and honest life. Even a belief in reincarnation is sometimes found. In some instances, these beliefs are incorporated into an extensive mythology, transmitted orally from generation to generation.

A spectrum of spiritual inclinations is exhibited by the indigenous peoples of the planet. Some have a far greater interest in the spiritual side of life than others, as in any group of human beings. Even so, the absence of literacy from their various cultures has in no way stifled the innate urge, present in all human

beings, to seek answers to the fundamental questions of life and death. In many cases, their understanding and perception of a spiritual presence in nature, leading to respect and reverence for themselves, for nature and for all other creatures, is to be admired. Had European culture been founded on such respect, the planet would not now be facing the potentially disastrous environmental problems that it does. Among these many and varied people, only a few have so far found their way into these pages, and that, too, in little detail.

Native North American Spirituality

Theories concerning the early human habitation of North America are being constantly challenged by new scientific evidence and speculation, but the earliest evidence of human beings in North America currently dates back more than 40,000 years. Some of these people, it is believed, came south from Siberia to Alaska, over the land bridge existing at that time across the Bering Strait; others came north from South and Central America, where their ancestors are thought to have arrived by boat, centuries before, from Polynesia and southern Asia; recent DNA research suggests that some may have come from northern Europe via Greenland and northeastern Canada.

The Native Americans themselves have a more mythological account of their origins. The myths vary from people to people. Hopis and Navajos claim that their ancestors did not come from other lands, but emerged from previous worlds beneath the earth, and then migrated throughout North America in four directions. Northeastern Algonquin and Iroquois believe that their ancient ancestors lived in a sky world, and that a woman fell from that sky world and was caught by water animals, who built the present-day earth for her to dwell upon. She is the mother of all native people. The Chumash people of California say that they have always been there.

However the various tribes arrived in North America, modern belief is that, adapting to changing climatic and environmental conditions, they changed from hunters using stone-tipped weapons to societies of warriors, farmers and artisans. By the time of their first contact with Europeans in the sixteenth century, approximately seven million people in over 600 tribes, speaking more than 200 different languages, lived in the land between Mexico and the northernmost territories, with human habitation reaching far into the Arctic circle. The diversity of these tribes makes any attempt to generalize about them very difficult. It would be like considering all European cultures as one, and seeking common themes among them. The task is made even more difficult by the fact that these native peoples had no written language.

Native North American tribal life differed from region to region. Forest areas with lakes and rivers provided meat from hunting and fishing as well as land for farming. But in areas with little rain or little warmth, much of the food came from hunting, often alongside a seminomadic lifestyle, moving with the seasons and the food supply. As need demanded, tribes would group together against

other tribes, conducting short surprise raids as a test of courage and to gain status. Some alliances were later formed against the Europeans who progressively took land from the tribes. Each tribe retained self-government, but collective decisions were made in joint council. War with the Europeans was fought in a much more desperate manner, once the Native North Americans understood that their land was being taken from them, and their lifestyle was under severe threat.

War with the Europeans escalated in the 1800s, with the last fierce resistance against the US Army in the 1890s. Historians estimate that by then epidemic illnesses, hunger and despair, as well as the warfare brought by the Europeans, had killed millions of Native North Americans. As few as 250,000 survived. Later their cultural and spiritual practices were outlawed, their children sent away from home to boarding schools and punished for using native languages. Many tribes were displaced from their traditional lands, and sent to sterile reservations. There, unemployment was widespread, social structures collapsed and people became dispirited. The result was that alcohol abuse, suicide and murder became commonplace.

In the last hundred years, however, their numbers have increased eightfold. In 1998 in the USA, 554 Native North American tribes were legally recognized with a combined population of nearly two million, together with a further 25 million or more US citizens having some known Native American ancestry. Sixty per cent of this 27 million were city dwellers, dispersed among other cultural groups. Many Native North Americans say that they feel invisible or, at least, unrecognized. This is partly because they represent less than one per cent of the total American population, but also because many people think of Native Americans in the past tense. The myth of the primitive, aggressive 'Indian' lives on or is sometimes replaced with the stereotype of the degenerate 'Indian', victim of poverty and alcoholism. Only more recently have Native American peoples been seen as deeply spiritual, with a respect for and understanding of the environment that would greatly benefit others.

Patterns of Belief

Native North Americans are a diverse people, and cataloguing their spiritual and religious belief systems is problematic. Ake Hultkrantz, widely regarded as a leading expert in Native American religions, writes:

> The diversity of these traditions cannot be reduced to a single tradition, for there is no simple entity such as '*the* Native American religion'.... Tribes that share a similar cultural life also tend to share a similar religious life. Nevertheless, each tribe has its own practices and customs, and we must remember that there are as many Native American religions as there are tribes.
>
> *Ake Hultkrantz, Native Religions of North America, NRA p.11*

Despite this incredible variety among tribes, some common themes can still be identified:

> Four prominent features in North American Indian religions are: a similar world view; a shared notion of cosmic harmony; emphasis on experiencing directly powers and visions; and a common view of the cycle of life and death.
>
> *Ake Hultkrantz, Native Religions of North America, NRA p.20*

One of the most widely documented Native American tribes is the Sioux, whose subgroups include the Dakota and the Lakota:

> The pre-eminent tangible symbol of traditional Lakota religion was the circle. The Lakotas perceived everything in the natural world as circular (except rock), for roundness was indicative of life itself. For this reason, the circle was held to be sacred *(wakan)*. Sun, sky, earth, moon, a human body, a tree trunk, day, night, a year, a man's life – all these were sacred circles. In respect for this natural order, the Lakotas made circular teepees, pitching them in camp circles, and sat in circles for ceremonial occasions. The wholeness of the circle, without beginning or end, represented the wholeness and oneness of the universe.
>
> *John Neihardt, SGBE p.80*

The Creator, Great Spirit or ultimate Reality was not seen as separate; It was seen as part of all that is. The tribes shared a common belief that everything is interconnected and possessed with a spiritual force that can affect people and all living things. The name for the Creator differed among the tribes yet referred to the One, the Source of all. Known as *Taiowa* (Hopi), *Tirawa* (Pawnee), *Wakan-Tanka* (Lakota) and so on, it was seen as the Great Mystery. It was never born, and can never die. It flowed through and among all things. Lakota holy man, George Sword, writing in 1905, describes this power:

> We will tell you of things that were known only to the shamans.... *Wakan-Tanka* is above everything and He governs everything.... The shamans address *Wakan-Tanka* as *Tobtob Kin*. This is in the speech that only the shamans know.... *Tobtob Kin* are Four-times-four gods.... The Four-times-four are *Wikan* (Sun) and *Hanwikan* (Moon); *Taku Skanskan* (That which moves, Sky) and *Tatekan* (Wind); *Tob Kin* (the Four Winds) and *Yumnikan* (Whirlwind); *Makakan* (Earth) and *Wohpe* (the Beautiful Woman); *Inyankan* (Rock) and *Wakinyan* (Thunder Being); *Tatankakan* (Buffalo Bull) and *Hunonpakan* (Two-Legged Grizzly Bear); *Wanagi* (Human Spirit) and *Woniya* (Human Life); and *Nagila* (Nonhuman Spirit) and *Wasicunpi* (Guardian Spirits).

> *Wakan-Tanka* is like sixteen different persons. But each person is *kan* (ancient, sacred). Therefore they are all only the same as one.
>
> *George Sword, in LBR pp.93–95*

The lesser spirits of natural forces, essential foods, and those of animals were revered and honoured by Native North Americans through ritual, song and dance, for it was important to gain the help of these powerful spiritual beings. Obtaining food through either hunting or harvesting was seen as an act of interdependence, a sacred reciprocal relationship in which the animal or plant was giving itself for the benefit of the people. Spirituality was not relegated to a separate category of life; all of life was seen from a spiritual point of view. Humanity was viewed as standing at the centre of all creation, at the meeting point of the four directions, making it a bridge between the earthly and the spirit worlds:

> We regard all created beings as sacred and important, for everything has a *wochangi* or influence which can be given to us, through which we may gain a little more understanding if we are attentive.
>
> *Black Elk, in SP p.59*

> It is the wish of *Wakan-Tanka* that the light enters into the darkness, that we may see not only with our two eyes, but with the one eye which is of the heart *(chante ishta).*
>
> *Black Elk, in SP p.42*

> Of all the created things or beings of the universe, it is the two-legged men alone who, if they purify and humiliate themselves, may become one with – or may know – *Wakan-Tanka.*
>
> *Black Elk, in SP p.138*

Individual religious experience was greatly respected. Focused observation and contemplation began with the physical world and continued, as much as the person was capable, through the continuum of more advanced orders of perception and definition. Personal dreams and visions were valued, and seen as spiritual guidance for the individual and the community. A defined moral way of life, with adherence to set principles, guided the individual. Generosity, honesty, courage, endurance and commitment to the welfare of the entire tribe were highly esteemed.

The sense of identity of Native North Americans survives most strongly through their oral traditions. But their speech was not a series of intellectual and abstract concepts. Instead, 'picture-words' were used to communicate, based on having entered into the reality of what was being expressed. The name given to

a person, for example, was not merely an identifying label, but actually revealed the character – the reality – of that person. Man Afraid of Horses was not simply an eccentric, colourful ID, but that man was, in reality, afraid of horses. The same applied to Bird Tied on his Head, a Kiowa war leader. Likewise, Buffalo Kills was a renowned buffalo hunter, and Crazy Horse did indeed ride a crazy horse. *Wakan-Tanka* was not only the name for the Great Mysterious, it *was* the Great Mysterious. Words were magical; words had power; they could make things happen. Calling out to an animal in a pleading, sympathetic way could gain the power of that animal spirit. Song-words could make it rain. Prayers to the Great Mysterious, or to an animal spirit, or to an eagle, could result in an important vision. Nalungiaq, a Netsilik Eskimo woman, observes:

> In the very earliest time, when both people and animals lived on earth, … all spoke the same language. That was the time when words were like magic. The human mind had mysterious powers. A word spoken by chance might have strange consequences. It would suddenly come alive, and what people wanted to happen could happen. Nobody can explain this; that's the way it was.
>
> *Nalungiaq, in NU p.285*

The word itself is hence understood to have a creative power of its own. Language is both the object and the instrument of religious experience. The spoken word was not about the reality of what is seen or thought; it was understood as the reality itself. Stories, myths and legends were central to their lives, providing the most profound guide to their understanding of creation. Taught by the elders to each child, these stories were based on values and assumptions that are fundamentally different from the European culture.

Rituals provided the means for a transformational journey into the spiritual world, with a return to the real world as empowered, healed, whole persons. The holy men or shamans who led these rituals had often received intense inner visions, been instructed by their predecessors, and had qualified through proper ceremony. They were viewed as having supernatural powers that made them mediums between the spirits and mankind:

> For the Lakota, belief and ritual were completely intertwined. Belief formed the intellectual and emotional underpinnings of religion.… Ritual provided the means for actualizing religious power and for expressing belief. The Lakota spoke of the purpose of ritual in terms of 'pleasing' the *wakan* (spiritual) beings.… But ritual was no mere reflection of belief; it was also the means to further belief for, through ritual, people came to expand their knowledge.
>
> *John Neihardt, SGBE p.82*

> Since the drum is often the only instrument used in our sacred rites, I should perhaps tell you here why it is especially sacred and important to us. It is because the round form of the drum represents the whole universe, and its steady strong beat is the pulse, the heart, throbbing at the centre of the universe. It is as the voice of *Wakan-Tanka,* and this sound stirs us, and helps us to understand the mystery and power of all things.
>
> *Black Elk, SP p.69*

Recognition of the pre-existence of the soul before entering a body, being able to leave the body in dreams and visions, and moving on at death are a part of many tribal stories. Archie Fire Lame Deer, son of a respected Lakota holy man writes:

> *Niya* literally means the 'spirit'. *Niya* is the personification of life, sometimes called the breath of life. He is a person's essence, one of the four souls who dwell in every human being. *Niya* leaves the body after its death. He is a guardian spirit who can talk to humans, and who gives a newborn baby its first breath.
>
> *Nagi* can be used in the same way white people use 'ghost', as a roaming spirit of the dead.... *Nagi* is one of a person's four souls. He is a presence. He is inside an animal, a stone, a tree or a stream. A human's ghost is called *wicha nagi,* while a four-legged's ghost is called *wamaka nagi. Nagi* is the shadow of everyone and everything. He is the spirit that goes with a man into the spirit world. *Nagi* never dies.... *Nagi* knows what has been and what will be.... *Nagi* can cause men and animals to talk to each other.
>
> *Sichun* is the 'intellect', an innate power dwelling inside every man or woman and one of a person's four souls. *Sichun* embodies knowledge and a special power given to every newborn child by the supernaturals. It is a power to guard against evil but, like everything else, it has both a positive and a negative nature.
>
> *Archie Fire Lame Deer, Gift of Power, GP pp.258–59*

The other of the "four souls", not mentioned by Archie Lame Deer in this context, is *nagila,* the 'little ghost' or 'non-human spirit', which is variously described by different sources. The enumeration of multiple souls is not uncommon in native spiritual traditions, and seem to relate to man's various subtle aspects – his mind, mental faculties, etheric and astral bodies, essential soul and so on.

Among the rituals that constitute a central focus of life for many Native North American tribes are three of great importance: *inipi* (sweat lodge), *hanblecheya* (vision quest), and *cannunpa wakan* (sacred pipe, peace pipe).

1. *Inipi:* the sweat lodge, during which a person soughy purification through long hours of prayer inside a steamy shelter. The ritual often preceded other sacred ceremonies. Arval Looking Horse, a Cheyenne River Sioux explains:

> The sweat lodge … is called *ini kagapi,* 'purification lodge'. The sweat lodge is a world half on top of the earth, half under it.… The sweat lodge is very sacred. It is the mother's womb. They always say when they come out of the sweat lodge, it's like being born again or coming out of the mother's womb.
>
> *Arval Looking Horse, in SIR pp.71–72*

> The sweat lodge, the *inipi.* Even the term 'sweat' has so little significance compared to the Lakota name, *inipi,* which is laden with values in our native culture. It means 'to live again'.
>
> *Beatrice Medicine, in SIR p.167*

2. *Hanblecheya:* the vision quest, during which the seeker removed himself to an isolated natural setting, doing without much food, water or sleep for several days. Here, he or she waited for a vision or guidance from the spiritual world, which often came with the assistance of an animal. Ake Hultkrantz writes that "probably no other cultures have given visions such importance in daily religious life as those of Native North America."[215] Archie Fire Lame Deer explains:

> *Hanblecheya* means 'crying for a vision'.… "Crying for a vision," my father once told me, "that's the beginning of our religion. It is the thirst for a dream from above – a vision which, while it lasts, will make you more than a man.…" It is like the prophets in the Christian Bible, like Jesus fasting in the desert, or Jacob wrestling with the angel, wrestling for a dream. It means hearing soundless voices, seeing things with your heart and mind, not with your eyes. It means shutting your eyes in order to see.
>
> *Archie Fire Lame Deer, Gift of Power, GP p.190*

Black Elk recalls a vision received when he was nine years old:

> And while I stood there I saw more than I can tell, and I understood more than I saw; for I was seeing in a sacred manner the shapes of all things in the spirit, and the shape of all shapes as they must live together like one being. And I saw that the sacred hoop of my people was one of many hoops that made one circle, wide as daylight and as starlight, and in the centre grew one mighty flowering tree to shelter all the children of one mother and one father. And I saw that it was holy.
>
> *Black Elk, in BES p.43*

3. *Cannunpa wakan* (sacred pipe) or *cannunpa iha wacekiya* (to pray with the pipe):[216] the smoking of the peace pipe, which was done with prayer before, during and after sacred rites or at other times when a sacred atmosphere was required. Arval Looking Horse explains how the sacred pipe is "handed down through the generations":

> I am a Cheyenne River Sioux, a Mnikowoju (Minneconjou).... My name is Arval Looking Horse, but I have an Indian name, too, Sunka Wakan Wicasa, Horse Man.... Just before a keeper of the sacred pipe dies, he has a vision of who to give the pipe to. It is always given to a blood relative, either a man or a woman. Just before my grandmother died, she had a vision, and gave the pipe to me. That was in 1966....
>
> This sacred pipe has been handed down through the generations, through blood relations. With it, our religion has been brought down through oral tradition – not written tradition. So I was taught the old way of carrying on the pipe for the Sioux nation. The sacred pipe was brought down to earth and given to the first keeper, Buffalo Standing Upright, a long time ago. I am the nineteenth generation to serve as pipe keeper....
>
> The pipe is for all people, all races, as long as a person believes in it. Anyone can have a pipe, and keep it within their family. But only the Sioux can have ceremonies with the sacred calf pipe.... The sacred pipe is very powerful; it is at the centre, and all other pipes are like its roots or branches. The sacred pipe transfers its power to the other pipes. All pipes have to be blessed, made sacred *(yuwakan).*
>
> *Arval Looking Horse, in SIR pp.67, 69*

Each tribe saw themselves as firmly attached to the particular landscape on which they lived, as a child to a mother. The land was held in joint reverence as a common resource, rather than in individual ownership. They also looked to the stars for guidance, basing the timing of their rituals, as well as the gathering of their food, on the progression of the sun through the constellations. In this way, they ensured that they maintained the natural order, and kept a balance in their lives. They understood that their destiny was not to change the land or to move away from it, but to guard and maintain it, usually in accordance with instructions received long ago from the Creator or their ancestral hero.

Some Recent Native Americans

Although the old traditions were always passed on by word of mouth, during the last half-century, a number of Native Americans have written of their lives, families and spiritual traditions, providing some direct insight into Native American life. Among these have been John Fire Lame Deer (1903–76) and his son Archie Fire Lame Deer (1935–2001).

But first a word on the manner in which Native American names are given, since it can be a source of confusion. One name may be given at birth or childhood; a second name may be given after the first vision quest; a dream may give rise to another adult name; and yet another name may follow the accomplishment of a brave or unusual deed. Moreover, before Native Americans were put on reservations, sons had different names from their fathers. And after 1870,

the missionaries and census takers required Native Americans to take Christian first names, their native name becoming their last name.

The first Lame Deer (Tahca Ushte) was a great nineteenth-century warrior, and chief of the Mnikowoju, one of the seven western tribes of the Sioux nation. Lame Deer had three sons by his first wife, one of whom, Crazy Heart (Cante Witko), was the paternal grandfather of John Fire Lame Deer. Tahca Ushte was killed in 1877 by US Army soldiers under the command of General Nelson (Bear Coat) Miles.

Crazy Heart was a famous warrior, a respected elder, and an *Ogle Tanka Un* (Shirt Wearer), which was a great honour. He had been in the fight with General Custer in 1876. He was listened to in the councils, and people sought his advice. John Fire Lame Deer says he never knew his grandfather, Crazy Heart, and that his maternal grandfather, Good Fox, played a large part in his life.

Good Fox was also a great warrior, and joined in the fight with Custer. But according to John Fire Lame Deer, he was not a killing man. His war honours came from 'counting coup' – riding up to the enemy and touching them with his coup stick. Good Fox also survived the Wounded Knee massacre of 1890. He was respected for his bravery and wisdom, and was given the job of supervising Sioux ceremonies, and caring for the sacred dancing ground. He died, nearly blind, in 1928.

John Fire Lame Deer's father was Wawi Yohi Ya (Let-Them-Have-Enough), from Standing Rock Reservation. Reputedly, he was a kind and smiling man, with great patience and generosity, often inviting his friends, relatives and others to feasts or give-away ceremonies – hence his native name. The missionaries gave him the first name of Silas and, among the whites, he later became known as Silas Fire. Archie Fire Lame Deer explains:

> The census takers who came to the reservation could not make sense of our Indian names, because they didn't understand the Lakota language. So they decided to give everybody English names. They made a big joke out of it, giving people whatever names came into their minds.... Just as Silas was about to be named and counted, a kerosene lamp tipped over and set fire to the tent. There was a big commotion, and someone was shouting, "Fire! Fire!" The census taker looked at my grandfather and said, "That's it. Your name is Fire!"
>
> *Archie Fire Lame Deer, Gift of Power, GP p.56*

Silas never went to school, and could not read or write. "He was the silent type, kept his mouth shut and did very little talking," says John Fire Lame Deer. "For weeks he did not say one goddam word to me."[217]

John Fire Lame Deer, a Lakota holy man from the Rosebud Reservation, South Dakota, was also a chief of the Mnikowoju. Technically, his name would

have been John Let-Them-Have-Enough, and because of the incident mentioned, he acquired the name Fire. But he preferred to be called Lame Deer (Tahca Ushte) after his great-grandfather. John Fire Lame Deer says that he was born a full-blooded Native American in a log cabin somewhere between Pine Ridge and Rosebud. His mother was Sally Red Blanket. But, as with most Indian children, much of his upbringing was done by his grandparents, Good Fox and his wife, Pte Sa Ota Win (Plenty White Buffalo).

John Fire Lame Deer spent his early years on the reservation, followed by a forced education at a boarding school run by whites. At sixteen, on a vision quest, he had a spiritual experience, which indicated a potential for becoming a holy man. He admits to a rowdy boyhood, and a life of carousing, rebelliousness, rodeo-clowning, criminality, jailing, excessive drinking, and a brief period in the US army in 1942. Only later in life did he settle down, marry (Ida), return to traditional Native American ways, and try to help other people. John Fire's elder sister died in 1914; his elder brother Tom and his wife died from the 'flu in 1917; and his mother died in 1920 from tuberculosis. He also lost a young son in the mid–1930s, and later a foster son. John Fire Lame Deer died on December 15th 1976, and was survived by his son, Archie Fire Lame Deer.

Archie Fire Lame Deer was born in 1935 to Josephine Quick Bear. He too admits in his autobiographical book, *The Gift of Power,* to having lived a raucous early life. But at the age of thirty-seven, he changed to a sober life of social service, counselling prison inmates, advocating native causes, meeting with the Pope, the Dalai Lama and others, teaching the old Native American ways, and conducting sacred ceremonies and rituals. He died in 2001, leaving a son, John Lame Deer, who continues his father's traditional ways.[218]

Another family providing insight into Native American life is the Crow Dogs, who trace their family name through four generations. The first was Old Man Crow Dog born in 1836, or maybe 1832. He was a full-blooded Brule, the grandfather of Henry Crow Dog, a twentieth-century Lakota (Sioux) holy man, and the great-grandfather of Leonard Crow Dog. Old Man Crow Dog was a great horseman, a renowned buffalo hunter and a medicine man. In 1854, chief Conquering Bear was killed by a canon shot from Lieutenant Grattan's soldiers, and the warriors killed Grattan in revenge. Old Man Crow Dog was in that fight, earning eagle feathers for his bravery, and Crow Dog history starts from this event. When he was put on the reservation, the census taker gave him the first name of Jerome; from then on he was known as Jerome Crow Dog. He had two wives, Catches Her and Jumping Elk, two brothers and a half-brother. In his later years, he killed a relative, Spotted Tail, in self-defence, and was condemned to hang, but was subsequently pardoned by the Supreme Court. Later, he became a Christian, though continuing to follow the old Native American religion. Even so, guilt followed him in his old age, and he went off to live out his final years alone, dying in 1912.[219]

John Crow Dog was the second Crow Dog, the son of Old Man Crow Dog, the father of Henry Crow Dog, and the grandfather of Leonard Crow Dog. Like Old Man Crow Dog, he was a loner. He avoided tribal politics, was a World War I veteran, and felt the guilt of his father's murderous deed. He tried peyote once in 1920, but never joined the peyote Native American church. He lived by himself, had no education, and went East once to join Buffalo Bill's circus. After a failed marriage, he lived alone, as a trapper and hunter. Two holy men once told John never to eat dog, as it was bad medicine for him. One night he got drunk with a friend, ate some discarded dog meat, got sick and died. Since he was not a Christian, had never been baptized, nor ever joined the Native American church, he was buried on distant land, by his son, Henry.

Henry Crow Dog (1899–1985) was a twentieth-century Lakota Sioux Native American, the son of John Crow Dog and Jumping Elk, the grandson of Old Man Crow Dog, and the father of Leonard Crow Dog. Respected as a medicine man, Henry Crow Dog initiated Dennis Means, a co-founder of AIM (the American Indian Movement) into the sweat lodge ceremony, and guided him in Native American spiritual life. Richard Erdoes observes, "Henry Crow Dog is a full-blooded Sioux elder with a majestic face, craggy as the Black Hills themselves. He is the grandson of the famous Crow Dog, a chief warrior, and a leader of the Ghost Dancers."[220]

In his early adult life, Henry Crow Dog worked for the railroad as a track layer. Then, from 1934–50, he worked as a grain harvester in Nebraska. But he never sold the land that was allotted to him by the government. He kept it, lived on it, and used it for ceremonies, later naming it Crow Dog's Paradise. He joined the peyote Native American church. He claimed that when he was a boy, there were twelve thousand Sioux alive; but after the famines, diseases, and reduced government food rations, only six thousand Brule remained. At one time, Rosebud Sioux Reservation was down to maybe five hundred full-bloods. Leonard Crow Dog, Henry's son, says his father was the greatest eagle dancer the tribe had ever had. Just before he died, in the winter of 1985, Henry Crow Dog said, "I am the last real Sioux left."[221]

Leonard Crow Dog (*b.*1942) is thus the fourth generation to carry the Crow Dog name, and he claims that he can trace his ancestry for nine generations.[222] He was one of the dancers at the 1971 Sun Dance at Wounded Knee, went on a vision quest at the Rosebud Sioux Reservation in 1972, was sent to jail for offences he claims were racially motivated plots against him, and joined AIM, serving not only as its spiritual leader, but also becoming involved in many of its political activities and violent confrontations with local and Federal government authorities. Leonard Crow Dog played a major part in the 1973 confrontation with Federal government forces at Wounded Knee, describing this event in great detail in his book, co-authored with Richard Erdoes, *Crow Dog: Four Generations of Sioux Medicine Men.* He is the father of several children, one, a son, named Pedro.

Another of the significant Native Americans leaders of the last century was Wovoka (1856–1932), also known as Wagud (Wood Cutter) and Jack or Jocko Wilson. Wovoka was a Paiute prophet, dreamer and visionary from Pyramid Lake, Mason Valley, Nevada, forty miles northwest of the Walker Lake Reservation.[223] He is remembered as the founder, in 1890, of the Ghost Dance. Regarded as a holy man, and known as the Messiah and the Prophet, he encouraged his people to join together in the Ghost Dance – a dance that would grant release from poverty and famine, would overcome the white man, and would lead them to a new world, the other world where they would be happy and free to live again as in the old days.[224] Sadly, the prophecy was never fulfilled.

Black Elk (Hehaka Sapa) (*b.*1863) was another renowned holy man, visionary, and spiritual guide of the Oglala Sioux. "I was born," he recalls, "in the Moon of the Popping Trees on the Little Powder River; in the winter when the Four Crows were killed."[225] His visions began at an early age. When only five, he heard voices calling to him:

> I was out in the woods trying to get a bird, and just as I was going into the woods, there was a thunderstorm coming and I heard a voice over there. This was not a dream – it actually happened. I saw two men coming out of a cloud with spears. As I was looking up,... there was a kingbird sitting there, and these two men were coming toward me singing the sacred song.... The kingbird said: "Look, the clouds all over are one-sided, a voice is calling you."
>
> *Black Elk, in SGBE, p.109*

In the summer of 1873, when Black Elk was only nine, he had his Great Vision. While out riding with other boys, he recalls that they stopped at a creek, for a drink. When he dismounted, his legs gave way beneath him, and he fell down, unable to walk. The other boys helped him back onto his horse, but when they camped that night, he was very unwell. The next day, they carried him in a pony drag until they reached the place where a number of their people were camped. He was lying in a tipi, his mother and father by his side, looking out through the opening, when he saw the same two men coming out of the clouds. At this point, it seems, he left his body, for he continues, "My legs did not hurt me any more, and I was very light."[226] ... "I followed those men on up into the clouds, and they showed me a vision of a bay horse standing there in the middle of the clouds."[227]

Black Elk saw many other things in his Great Vision, including Thunder Beings (*wakinyan,* powers of the west, having the power to destroy or to cure), the Horses of the Four Directions, the Six Grandfathers, the Black and Red Sacred Roads, Healings Herbs, the Sacred Tree, and the Soldier Weed of Destruction. He was also given instructions by the Six Grandfathers. This extraordinary vision is described in great detail in *Black Elk Speaks* but, out of

fear and lack of understanding of the meaning of the Thunder Beings, Black Elk shared his vision with no one.

In the following years, fighting between the US Army and the Native Americans became severe. In 1877, the medicine man, Crazy Horse, was killed, and Black Elk and his people fled to Canada seeking refuge from the soldiers. Upon his return to Pine Ridge, three years later, when he was seventeen or eighteen, Black Elk, now obsessively overcome by fear of the Thunder Beings, revealed his vision to Black Road, a wise old medicine man. Black Elk was told that he was meant to be a *heyoke* (a clown or fool), and that he had to humble himself before his people, so that he might carry out the message of his vision: to teach.

In 1881, Black Elk began his career as a medicine man. Over the years, he healed and guided his people in the traditional Lakota ways, becoming a revered sage. In 1886, he attained some notoriety by joining Buffalo Bill's Wild West Circus, and travelled to Europe. On his return to Pine Ridge, he found poverty, famine and disease everywhere. In 1890, he participated in the Ghost Dance in the hope of relieving the misery of his people. But when the Ghost Dance failed, and so many Indians were slaughtered at Wounded Knee in December 1890, and his wife had died, Black Elk was pressed to gave up the practice of shamanistic healing.

The turning point came in 1904 when a Jesuit priest interrupted Black Elk while he was treating a sick boy. Grabbing Black Elk by the neck, he threw him and his sacred objects out of the tent, screaming "Satan, get out!" Soon after, Black Elk was baptized into the Catholic Church, and given a Christian first name, Nicholas. After that, it seems, he never practised the Lakota religious ceremonies again.[228] In 1931, Black Elk met John Neihardt, and so began the famous interviews which are recorded in the book, *Black Elk Speaks*.

The missionaries and several other Christian writers have thought that Black Elk turned his back on traditional Lakota beliefs, thoroughly embracing Catholicism. In 1977, however, Lucy Looks Twice (Black Elk's only surviving daughter) told Hilda Neihardt Petri (the daughter of John Neihardt) that in his last days, as he lay sick with the family gathered round him in his home in Manderson, South Dakota, he commented, "The only thing I really believe is the pipe religion."[229] Frank Fools Crow once related:

> Black Elk told me that he had decided that the Sioux religious way of life was pretty much the same as that of the Christian churches, and there was no reason to change what the Sioux were doing.
>
> *Frank Fools Crow, in SIR p.92*

Frank Fools Crow (1891–1989) was a Sioux medicine man from the Pine Ridge Reservation, highly regarded as a *yuwipi* man. In the *yuwipi* ceremony, the *yuwipi* man is wrapped in a blanket, with his hands and feet tied. In the complete darkness of an enclosed locked room, amidst drumming, pipe smoking,

chants, and the use of various medicine items, spirit beings fly about, usually in the form of flashing lights, sounds, and drafts of air. When the room lights are turned on again, the *yuwipi* man is found to have become untied, freed by the spirit beings, and he then delivers the message obtained from them: healing, instructions, the location of lost objects or persons, and so on. According to Dr Thomas H. Lewis, a mental health worker at Pine Ridge and (in 1986) a practising psychiatrist from Billings, Montana:

> Fools Crow was one of the most powerful of the *yuwipi* healers, a politically powerful medicine man and sage. He is the *wicasa wakan,* the *wapiya wicasa,* the *yuwipi wapiya,* the one who conducts the ritual aspects of the Sun Dance, the priest, the medicine man. He is also the *pejuta wicasa,* the medical practitioner of his district.
>
> *Thomas Lewis, in SIR pp.20, 177–78*

Distortion of Native American Traditions

Although many of the oral traditions seem to be very old, referring to natural events that occurred thousands of years ago, it is difficult to be sure that they have remained untouched from the period before contact with Europeans. In their retelling, the more modern experience seeps into the stories. There are religious, political, military and economic overlays.

The Europeans came with the Christian religious tradition which teaches that mankind was thrown out of Eden, and must struggle to subdue the 'wilderness' without in order to survive. History is thus perceived in a straight line. For Native North Americans, history is a series of repeating cycles that are a blueprint for living. Their world view, in which everything has a meaning and purpose, allowed them to accept two realities at the same time, leading the people in their early contact with Europeans to be able to accommodate to the religion of others without abandoning their own beliefs.

Later, though punished if not conforming to government policies, and condemned by Christian missionaries if not following Christian practices, the native people may have only partially embraced other religions while never completely relinquishing their traditional beliefs and practices. This mixing of religious stories, symbols and ceremonies resulted in a polyglot of religious practices. Today some Native North Americans are Christians, others combine traditional ways with Christian ceremonies, while others have turned to the materialistic world, discarding all religious belief. The shamans have kept many of their practices secret, only sharing some of them in recent years with those they respect and trust.

Translation, too, can dislodge a story from the cultural context in which it was originally told. Scholars, on the one hand, can master textual documents, but have little awareness of the oral culture, and no lived experience with the people themselves. On the other hand, the Catholic priests and anthropologists who

spoke the language and actually lived with Native North Americans had their own biases that influenced how they translated or understood the ancient stories.

Oral tradition is often charismatic and innovative, with new revelations modifying or even replacing older traditions. It is meant to remain flexible and vital. Thus, within the context of changing environmental and cultural circumstances, the Native North American spirit lives on. N. Scott Momaday, a modern Native North American writer of the Kiowa people who has received the Pulitzer Prize for one of his novels, celebrates this continuing survival of the Native North American culture. In his poem, *The Delight Song of Tsoai-Talee,* he reveals the sense of oneness with and love for all creation that characterize his people. Tsoai–Talee is Momaday's Kiowa name:

I am a feather in the bright sky.
I am the blue horse that runs in the plain.
I am the fish that rolls, shining, in the water.
I am the shadow that follows a child.
I am the evening light, the lustre of meadows.
I am an eagle playing with the wind.
I am a cluster of bright beads.
I am the farthest star.
I am the cold of the dawn.
I am the roaring of the rain.
I am the glitter on the crust of the snow.
I am the long track of the moon in a lake.
I am a flame of four colours.
I am a deer standing away in the dusk.
I am a field of sumac and the *pomme blanche.*
I am an angle of geese upon the winter sky.
I am the hunger of a young wolf.
I am the whole dream of these things.

You see, I am alive, I am alive.
I stand in good relation to the earth.
I stand in good relation to the gods.
I stand in good relation to all that is beautiful.
I stand in good relation to the daughter of *Tsen-tainte.*
You see, I am alive, I am alive.

N. Scott Momaday, The Delight Song of Tsoai-Talee, AGP p.22

The Nahua of Central America

Among the native peoples of Central America, the Nahua, a race who once lived in the area now known as Mexico, are well known for their spiritual tendencies. When the Spanish invaders arrived in Mexico during the sixteenth century, they

found the Nahua subjugated by the tyrannous Aztecs, who perpetrated holocausts and human sacrifices in a cruel and ruthless dominion over the other tribes of the Mexican high plateau. Yet, as can be seen from their tradition of poetry and love of life, the Nahua inspiration of *Nahuaque,* the Cause of All, still shone through the dark horror of the Aztec 'civilization'. The Spaniards, however, seemed hardly to notice the deeply spiritual tradition already present among the Nahua, and readily set about converting them to their own belief system: Christianity.

Nevertheless, a considerable quantity of Nahua poetry has been preserved by the deep cultural traditions of their once great nation. In their prime, the Nahua had a tradition of poet-kings, of leaders who were possessed of wisdom both spiritual and mundane. They saw God as the "mirror that makes things shine"[230] – clearly an image from a living rather than a petrified tradition.

The Nahua, too, had their mystic teachers. Nezahualcóyotl, a fifteenth-century king who ruled over the state of Texcoco, bordering Mexico, seems to have been the last of the great spiritually minded rulers. He reigned at a time when the deep spiritual tradition was already being overlain by decadence and the belief in a multitude of gods. By this time, the Nahua-Toltec mystic understanding was already on the decline, and warfare troubled the people. Nezahualcóyotl spoke of the inner worlds, describing them as nine in number. The ninth world, he said, was that of the divine "Cause of All":

> In the ninth world is the Cause of All, of us and of all created things, the only one God who created all things both visible and invisible.
>
> *Nezahualcóyotl, in FIN p.107*

The South American Guaraní

The Guaraní people of South America, who live in southern Brazil, Paraguay, Argentina and Uruguay, are of mixed Spanish and pure Guaraní descent. Beginning with the Spanish conquests in the seventeenth century, acculturation was often rapid, taking only a few generations to alter the dominant culture. A few independent or partly acculturated tribes, remnants of the aboriginal Guaraní, exist today in Paraguay, Argentina and Brazil.

In the forests of eastern Paraguay, there are three large subgroups of indigenous Guaraní: the Mbyá, the Paí Cayuá and the Avá-Chiripá, speaking Chiripá, Mbyá, Apapokuvá and Tembecuá dialects of the Guaraní language. The Avá-Chiripá subgroup speaks a dialect midway between the general mestizo (racially mixed) Guaraní of Paraguay and the archaic Guaraní spoken by the Mbyá.

When encountered by Spaniards in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Guaraní, also called the Tupinambá, were dominant in a large area from the Atlantic coast westward to the Paraguay River, lands now known as Brazil, Paraguay, Argentina and Uruguay. Early descriptions of the Guaraní in Paraguay are given by Spanish conquistadors focused on dominating the native

people. The Guaraní were rapidly acculturated by the Spanish, whose reports often reveal more about their colonial aims than they do about the indigenous people.

The early Guaraní people lived in small villages of up to sixty families, under the dual leadership of a political chief and a religious shaman. Living in a warm climate with moderate rainfall and fertile soil, they practised a semi-nomadic life of slash and burn agriculture, abandoning their fields for new ones every two to three years, using no irrigation or fertilizer. They also gathered honey, pine nuts and palm-tree products, and practised hunting and fishing.

The Guaraní, apparently, were not a class-structured society; archaeological evidence reveals no pomp or ceremony in the burial of privileged persons. Lacking a strong priestly or secular class, the Guaraní valued the *paí guazú* or great shamans, who performed such services as curing disease and ensuring a good harvest. Seventeenth-century records indicate that shamans may also have been village chiefs. Their religious mythology centred on the Creator, *Nanderú Guazú,* and his twin sons, *Kurahy* and *Yacy.*

At the time of the conquest, these native people spoke Old Guaraní, known in present times through written documents of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These documents were written by Jesuits, who wrote the first Guaraní grammar, and who first put the Guaraní language into writing.

Contact of the Guaraní with Europeans was devastating. Thousands died from European diseases brought to South America by the Spanish. Countless others were taken as slaves by the Portuguese. According to the French anthropologist, Pierre Clastres, the Guaraní, numbering 1,500,000 in 1530, were reduced to 150,000 by 1730.

In Paraguay, aboriginal Guaraní life was quickly altered as the two groups merged into a distinctive national culture. Some Guaraní elements – kinship ties and village organization – adapted to Spanish influence; other Guaraní ways – the role of women as agricultural workers and kinship labour obligations – were incorporated into colonial patterns.

In Paraguay, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, around 60,000 Guaraní lived in mission towns founded and run by Jesuit priests. Many books have been written about the Jesuits in Paraguay. From 1607 to 1768, the Jesuits formed and maintained settlements of the native people. These mission towns, called Reductions, were in areas remote from the central Spanish settlement. The controversial social order of the missions, a sort of communism, has been idealized or condemned depending on various writers' viewpoints. Religious teachings were emphasized, and economic affairs were strictly communal. Everyone dressed alike and lived in identical dwellings. Field work was collective, herds and granaries were publicly owned, and the products of work were equally distributed. Only the Jesuits themselves, the benevolent dictators, were socially distinctive. When they were expelled in 1767, the Reductions fell apart, with the native people leaving the missions and retreating to the forest, joining the

Guaraní who had lived as 'wild men'. The Avá Chiripá are believed to have lived under the Jesuits for these one 150 years or so.

As Philip Caraman explains in *The Lost Paradise: An Account of the Jesuits in Paraguay,* the character of the Guaraní people contributed to the initial success of the Jesuits there. The Jesuits, he observes, described the Guaraní as monotheists who seemed "close to the kingdom of God".[231] He notes that Bartolomé Meliá, a Spanish Jesuit of Asunción who was on good terms with aboriginal Guaraní in the forests of Paraguay, reported that he found enough religion in common with them to stay up "three or four hours a night praying with them to their big Father".[232]

Paraguay today has a mestizo population that speaks the Guaraní language and retains some of the original native musical tradition. Much of the tribal culture and organization has been lost by this blending of Guaraní and Spanish cultures, although the Guaraní language has survived to become the dominant language of Paraguay. In spite of the fact that almost everyone in eastern Paraguay speaks Guaraní, Spanish is the official language taught in schools. Written Guaraní is not common except in popular magazines, and in songs and poems that circulate in print. This hinders standardization of the language.

Guaraní is a Tupian language, spoken by the Guaraní tribes at the time of the Spanish conquest, and known through written documents of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The exact number of dialects and languages of the Tupí stock remained unknown, even as late as 1967. Variations of the Tupí-Guaraní language are spoken in Bolivia and Argentina, as well as Paraguay. Several dialects are spoken by tribes in Brazil, eastern Paraguay and Argentina.

The Avá-Chiripá, a subgroup of the Guaraní, call themselves the Avá-Katú-ité, or 'the true men'. From a study of their oral traditions and their history as recorded by Spanish chroniclers, Leon Cádogan believes the Avá-Chiripá were survivors of the destruction during the Tarumá pacifications. At that time there were two great Guaraní chiefs, Paraguá and Guarirá. Paraguá allowed his people to be subjugated and Christianized by the Spaniards, while Guarirá's followers retreated into the deep forests. It was the followers of Paraguá who lived in the Jesuit 'Reductions' until the expulsion of the Jesuits.

Thus, the present Avá-Chiripá are probably descendants of Guaraní who returned to live in the forest after living for a 150 years under the instruction of priests of the Society of Jesus. The question naturally arises, therefore: what effect has Christianity had on their religious beliefs and rituals? Bartolomé maintains that the Jesuits' influence was superficial.

Although the Avá-Chiripá lived under Jesuit rule for almost 150 years, if their rich mythology is compared with that of other groups (*e.g.* the Mbyá) who were not evangelized, it can be appreciated that both oral traditions are basically similar. This persistence bears witness to the fact that there was little or no interruption in the transmission of tribal myths and cosmological concepts even

within the missions. The proselytizing process produced a few syncretic manifestations, but did not succeed in altering the symbolic content of the indigenous culture at the deepest level.[233]

While it has been claimed that the feathered cross which the Avá-Chiripá use in their rituals is borrowed from Christian symbolism, Bartolomé points out that the symbol is found in early Apapokuvá cosmogony, which describes the eternal wooden cross upon which the Creator, *Nanderú Guazú,* built the earth. As Bartolomé further explains, the Avá-Chiripá actually used the Jesuits' Christian teaching to reinforce their own spiritual and religious beliefs. Believing in their shamans as healers and holy men whose souls could travel to divine realms and commune with God and God's Messengers, the Avá-Chiripá accepted Christ as a great shaman of former times.

The Guaraní are deeply and intensely focused on the ideals of spiritual life, including spiritual perfection, meditation and soul travel. Pierre Clastres called them "the theologians of the forest".[234] Egon Schaden has said:

> Throughout the world there is certainly no people or tribe to whom the biblical phrase, "My kingdom is not of this world," is more applicable. The entire mental universe of the Guaraní revolves round the concept of the Beyond.
>
> *Egon Schaden, Aspectos Fundamentais da Cultura Guaraní, in SAC p.105*

León Cádogan has likewise written:

> The Guaraní is the man who waits, dreams, and sings. But above all, he is the man who prays, who is trying to know God, and live by His side.
>
> *León Cádogan, La Literatura de los Guaraníes, LG p.32*

Central religious beliefs of the Guaraní are expressed in a cosmogony and mythology that pre-existed the mid-sixteenth-century Spanish arrival in South America. This mythology, from the Mbyá group, was written down in the Guaraní language by the Jesuits in the book *Ayvu Rapytá (Origin of the Word).* Here the Guaraní express their belief that man has a soul of divine origin. The first work of the Creator *(Mybá)* was the *Ñe'eng* or vital Word, the divine part of the soul. The divine soul was sent by *Ñe'eng Rú Eté* (True Father of the vital Word) to dwell within man.

Noting the striking similarity to the opening lines of John's gospel, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God," it can be understood why Clastres called the Guaraní "theologians of the forest". While *ñe'e* means 'speech' in classical Guaraní, Bartolomé observes that 'language *(ñe'e)*' and 'soul of divine origin *(ang)*' are synonymous among Guaraní groups such as the Chiripá, the Mbyá Jeguakáva, and the Apapokuvá. He also notes that most Mbyá subgroups define *Ñe'eng* as 'divine human soul' or 'human voice' or 'the vital Word'.

Nanderú Guazú, the Creator, is the supreme deity of the Guaraní. *Nanderú Mbaé-Kua'a,* the Creator's companion, plays a vague role in earthly life. *Kurahy,* the sun god and the prototypical shaman, is one of the twin sons of *Nanderú* and the First Mother, *Nandé Cy. Yacy,* the moon god, is the other twin son of *Nanderú.* These deities are common to the Guaraní people as a whole.

Both spiritual endeavours and religious rituals of the Guaraní centre on shamans, who serve as spiritual leaders of their communities. In Bartolomé's account of the Avá-Chiripá, the shaman pursues an intense inner spiritual life by means of a vegetarian diet and deep meditation, in which he evokes the image of a master shaman.

Australian Aboriginal Spirituality

Australian Aboriginal culture is profoundly influenced by a spiritual perception of the world: every element of traditional Aboriginal life is saturated by religious practice that is grounded in a spiritual way of looking at things. The depth of this spirituality, however, is very difficult to gauge. There are two main reasons for this.

Firstly, Aboriginal society throughout Australia experienced rapid and traumatic transformation after the arrival of Europeans in 1788; almost all this history involved systematic displacement, dispossession, genocide and exploitation at the hands of European settlers, who often justified their obliteration and repression of Aboriginal spiritual practices in the name of progress. Entire tribes, once occupying vast tracts of land, have been completely destroyed. Until the 1970s, harsh laws and racial discrimination threatened to obliterate the surviving pockets of traditional culture in central and northern Australia. But Aboriginal communities across the continent preserved, and still observe, spiritual practices of many types.

Secondly, Aboriginal people are, because of this history, extremely reluctant to communicate all except the most outward of their spiritual and religious practices, and are eager to protect their privacy. Successive initiations into spiritual practices and strictly observed secrecy about the contents of these esoteric initiations are absolutely central and ubiquitous.

In a culture dominated by a living sense of a mystical cosmology – one that is believed in and deeply felt by almost all Aboriginal people – it is extremely difficult to judge the degree to which Aboriginal spiritual practices correspond to those of any other system of mysticism. Although many Aboriginal spiritual practices probably parallel those of other cultures, traditional Aboriginal culture throws up almost insurmountable obstacles to comparative religious study.

A study of mystical life in traditional Aboriginal culture is further hindered by the absence of Aboriginal written records, the unreliability and inconsistency of European studies of Aboriginal mysticism, and the customary Aboriginal secrecy. Recent research into Aboriginal spirituality has exposed fundamental flaws in earlier records and descriptions, where even the transcription of names

varied wildly. This leaves very little credible material for any study of Aboriginal mysticism, and has led to a universal reluctance by knowledgable Aborigines to provide any account of their esoteric teachings. An example of the inadequacy and inaccuracy of European written sources is the conclusion of one early-twentieth-century observer that he had found the mystically inclined descendants of the ancient Egyptians.

It is therefore impossible to separate Aboriginal mysticism from its historical context. Its emphasis seems to have been on the establishment and maintenance of a mystical relationship with the land, the natural world of plants and animals, and the spirits and gods associated with creation, rather than with the liberation of the soul. Moreover, traditional Aboriginal society was never monolithic: there were many societies, hundreds of language groups, and their spiritual beliefs were in a constant state of transition, responding to the teachings of different spiritual leaders, both before and after the arrival of European settlers.

Baiami, for example, is the name of a Supreme Being who appears in accounts of the cosmogony of Aboriginal tribes in southeastern Australia that differ significantly from those in the North. *Baiami* dwells in heaven on a throne of transparent crystal surrounded by beautifully carved pillars from which emanate the colours of the rainbow. He created a son, *Grogorally,* who mediates between earth and heaven: "The son's spirit they represent as being in every part of the habitable world, spreading – as was expressed to me – over the supposed distance of England to Sydney."[235] Another intermediary, *Moodgeegally,* is portrayed as the first human, periodically ascending by a path of ladders and steps, *Dallamangel,* on a three-day journey to heaven.[236]

Many observers have noted that Aboriginal religions are very much centred upon 'this' world, as opposed to spiritual liberation from earthly existence. The omnipresent religious activities of Aboriginal people relate to the conduct of life here on earth and after death. Although some researchers have recorded an Aboriginal belief in the reincarnation of departed relatives,[237] there seems to be no widespread belief in individual spiritual life before birth or after death.[238] Wallace notes that Aboriginal philosophy does not envisage existence preceding creation; the spirit ancestors appeared and changed what had already been created. In this tradition there is no First Cause, world origin or creation. In many other ways, the beliefs of Aboriginal peoples are different from those of other spiritual teachings. Various cults have also arisen due to European influence that incorporate Christian references to mystical revelation, such as the Kimberleys (a rugged mountain region in arid northwestern Australia) cult of the Revelation of Jinimin, an Aboriginal form of Jesus, and the 'Sunday Business' cult.

It is necessary to emphasize, therefore, the hermetic nature of Aboriginal society. As one anthropologist, Richard Kimber, observes: there is a "fantastic amount of secrecy" involved in the continuous initiatory religious activity of the Western Desert and other traditional communities.[239] Apart from detribalized Aboriginal groups, according to Wallace, "Aboriginal people have no atheists,

no agnostics. Each Aboriginal person is a true believer in his or her own religious culture."[240] Indeed, Aboriginal mystical poetry, preserved in oral form, can resound with the urgency and sense of mystic revelation familiar from the more widely known mystical traditions. According to Piruwarna, an old Aborigine from the Pilbara Desert:

> Sit with dignity and talk with composure!
> No small talk!
> Elaborate on this: What means more to you:
> The silly splinter that went in?
> Or the spirit from heaven – which you really are –
> to wait in the waterhole?
>
> *Piruwarna, in PSH p.1*

Perhaps one of the most well known concepts of Aboriginal spiritual life is 'dreamings', brought to the notice of European culture by Peter Sutton's book, *Dreamings: The Art of Aboriginal Australia.* Dreamings are ancestral beings: according to Aboriginal belief, they precede and endure beyond the life of any person and are inherent in things and people. Anthropologist W.E.H. Stanner quoted one old Aboriginal: "Old man, you listen! Something is there; we do not know what; something ... like engine, like power, plenty of power; it does hard work; it *pushes.*"[241]

The word 'dreaming' is itself a recent mistranslation from a Central Australian Aboriginal language. Aboriginal people believe that the world was created in a series of founding dramas in which ancestors, at once human and nonhuman in form, emerged from the depths of the spirit world. These mythical ancestors liberated life-giving forces in a creation story that loosely corresponds to the descent of life forces towards the material plane as described in other mystical traditions, and Aboriginal people often emphasize the involution of spiritual force into matter.

Certain places are supposed to have retained the imprint of the passage of these spirits. At these places, life force pours forth in spiritual currents. In other words, something came out of, moved across and went back into the earth at these sites. In the absence of writing and permanent places of worship, the location of events in space takes on special significance. Spiritual power residing in sacred sites can be tapped with the appropriate rituals and, over a period of many years, Aboriginal adults are gradually initiated into more ceremonies, learning the deeper and more hermetic meanings of the ceremonies associated with these sacred sites. Such activities take up a significant proportion of the time of traditional communities. Teddy Jampinjinpa, a Central Desert Aborigine, explains how their ceremonies are necessary for the continued well-being of the land: "We got to have *Kurdunguru* (ritual overseers) and *Kirda* (ritual embodiers of ancestral events).... We hold the country every time, never lose him together."[242]

The dreaming is also referred to as the Law. It is not unlike the foundational concept of many of the world religions, but is distinct from them in its insistence on the omnipresence of the dreaming as a living experience in each individual's experience of spirituality. This mystical conception of individual experience is confirmed by the way that, when a new sacred song or piece of knowledge is invented or discovered by the Aboriginal people, it is said to have been "found".

In traditional Aboriginal thought, there is no distinction between the sacred and the profane: all aspects of life revolve around the Law. There is, according to Wallace, "nothing that happens in everyday life that is not decreed by the spirit ancestors".[243] Wallace explains the Aborigines' literal belief in the ancestors, their teaching and their totemic significance, through the myth of *Wati Malu*, the 'Man-Kangaroo', who is the spirit ancestor of all kangaroos and all people of the kangaroo totem. In the myth, the spirit ancestor changed the landscape of Central Australia as he travelled, and the places where he stood during his travels are now sacred sites. There are rocks that represent incidents along his way, and each has a name. They contain the same life force *(kurunpa)*, and people visit them. A man will point to these stones, saying: "This is my uncle," and all present will acknowledge the truth of the statement. Such beliefs are embraced by both men and women.

Spiritual perceptions and access to higher worlds can be experienced only through continued participation and involvement in religious life. Such spiritual consciousness is found in old men and women, whom anthropologist A.P. Elkin referred to as "men of high degree". These old people have abilities resembling yogic *siddhis:* to travel through the air, to travel under the ground, to read minds and to prophesy events. Such men and women follow a tradition of spiritual and magical practices that may be categorized as an Australian form of shamanism. These 'doctor-men' travel in inner worlds during dreams, remember their contents, and interpret and teach their significance. All people are supposed to have the potential to be doctor-men, although this potential is rarely called upon. The power of doctor-men is recognized and respected in traditional communities but, unlike the shamans of some other indigenous tribes, their abilities are shared to different degrees by other members of each tribe.

1.15 The Perennial Philosophy

As these glimpses of the world's religious and spiritual traditions indicate, mysticism does exist as more than just another belief system. However it may be explained, and whether or not a person believes in it, there are those who have had mystical experiences. It is their teachings and writings which have formed what is loosely called mysticism. Such mystics have lived in all ages and cultures of the past; they have been present in probably all religions; and

they are living at the present time. Mysticism, as Aldous Huxley called it, is the perennial philosophy.

Those who have had some kind of true mystical experience are agreed that its reality is self-evident, and that its relevance to life is fundamental. But because mystical experience is essentially indescribable, mystical teachings are very easily misunderstood. Most people try to understand spiritual matters through words and intellect, since that is the normal means of human comprehension. But to try and understand spiritual experience through the intellect leads automatically to differences of opinion, for no two human beings see or describe things in the same way. Moreover, there are many stations on the ascent to the Divine, and mystics who have reached different levels on the spiritual journey have often described things differently. It is because of these differences – human and mystical – that the various religions and spiritual traditions have evolved.

Cultures diverge; religions develop out of spiritual traditions and mystical teachings when social circumstances are conducive; various differences of belief develop within these traditions; splinter groups form and major schisms take place; there may even be outbreaks of violence and war in the name of God. These are all matters of history, the product of human prejudice and human limitations.

Even so, the belief that behind everything there is one God, one Great Spirit, one primal divine Energy, one common ground on which all human beings are the same – this belief is never completely smothered. It runs as a common thread through all human existence. To find that Reality is the aim of all true mysticism, and the height of all true mystical experience.



Notes

1. N.K. Sandars, *Epic of Gilgamesh, EG* p.24.
2. N.K. Sandars, *Epic of Gilgamesh, EG* p.26.
3. N.K. Sandars, quoting various Sumerian sources, *EG* p.26.
4. See S.N. Kramer, *Sumerian Mythology, SMS* pp.177–79.
5. See Geoffrey Bibby, *Looking for Dilmun, LD* pp.151–52.
6. W.B. Henning, *Zoroastrianism,* in *ERL* p.294.
7. Search "Zoroastrianism" and "numbers" on the internet for a varied selection of relevant data.
8. *2 Kings* 14:25.
9. *Genesis* 12:1*ff.*
10. *Deuteronomy* 6:3, 11:9, 26:9,15, 27:3, 31:20; *Ezekiel* 20:6,15; *Exodus* 3:8, 8:8,17, 13:5, 33:3; *Jeremiah* 11:5, 32:33; *Joshua* 5:6; *Leviticus* 20:24; *Numbers* 13:27, 14:8, 16:13–14; see also *Genesis* 17:1*ff.*

11. *e.g. Zohar* 1:89a, 97b; *cf. ZSS1* pp.295, 322.
12. *Genesis* 17:1*ff.*
13. *Genesis* 32:28.
14. *Exodus* 3:1*ff.*
15. *cf. Zohar* 5:260b–261a; *cf. ZSS5* pp.344–45.
16. *1 Samuel* 16:13, *KJV.*
17. *1 Samuel* 18:12, 14, 28.
18. *2 Kings* 2:11.
19. *2 Kings* 2:11–12.
20. *Ezekiel* 1:4*ff.*, 8:1*ff.*, 10:1*ff.*, 40:1*ff.*
21. David Blumenthal, *Understanding Jewish Mysticism, UJM* pp.189–91.
22. David Blumenthal, *Understanding Jewish Mysticism, UJM* p.190.
23. Paul Fenton, *The Treatise of the Pool, TOP* pp.1–7.
24. Paul Fenton, *The Treatise of the Pool, TOP* p.64 (n.95).
25. Ben Zion Bokser, *Jewish Mystical Tradition, JMT* p.15.
26. Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* V:15.
27. Josephus, *Antiquities* XV:371 (10.4), *JCW* p.333.
28. Philo Judaeus, *Every Good Man who is Virtuous is also Free* 12, *WPJ3* p.523.
29. Philo Judaeus, *Every Good Man who is Virtuous is also Free* 12, *WPJ3* p.523.
30. *Thanksgiving Hymns* IX:10–15 (6), *CDSS* p.253.
31. *Thanksgiving Hymns* IX:20–25 (6), *CDSS* p.254.
32. *Thanksgiving Hymns* XVI:1–15 (18), *CDSS* pp.278–79.
33. *John* 10:30, *KJV.*
34. *John* 1:14, *KJV.*
35. *John* 4:10–11, 7:38, *KJV.*
36. *John* 6:31–58, *KJV.*
37. *John* 15:1–8, *KJV.*
38. *John* 6:1*ff.*
39. *John* 9:1*ff.*
40. *John* 11:1*ff.*
41. *John* 4:9*ff.*
42. *John* 3:1*ff.*, *KJV.*
43. *2 John* 1:1; *3 John* 1:1.
44. *1 John* 1:1.
45. See also **1 John** (glossary) and *The Gospel of Jesus, GJ* p.106*ff.*
46. See *The Gospel of Jesus, GJ* p.82*ff.*
47. For a more detailed comparison of Luke and Matthew's accounts, see *The Gospel of Jesus, GJ* pp.94–97.
48. *Matthew* 1:20, 2:6; *Luke* 1:27,32,69, 2:4,11; *Isaiah* 7:13–14, 11:1–16; *Micah* 5:1.
49. For a more detailed comparison of Luke and Matthew's accounts, see *The Gospel of Jesus, GJ* pp.94–97.
50. *Colossians* 4:14, *KJV.*
51. *Matthew* 24:1–2, *Luke* 21:5–6, 20.
52. *Acts* 23:6.
53. *Acts* 26:5, *ANTH.*
54. *Acts* 22:28.

55. *Acts* 23:16*ff.*
56. *Ephesians* 3:10.
57. *1 Corinthians* 1:24, 2:7.
58. Some scholars believe *Colossians* and *Ephesians* to be an elaboration of Paul's philosophy by others. See **Colossians** (Glossary).
59. *Acts* 9:19–25.
60. *Acts* 9:27–30.
61. *Acts* 23:23–24.
62. *Acts* 24:26–27.
63. *Acts* 25:1*ff.*
64. *Acts* 27:1*ff.*
65. *Acts* 26:32.
66. *1 Corinthians* 11:23–26 on the eucharistic meal is perhaps the only exception.
67. *Galatians* 1:17–19, 2:1–21.
68. *Acts* 9:26–28.
69. *Acts* 15:36–41.
70. See **Colossians** (Glossary).
71. See *ANTH* p.518.
72. M.R. James, *The Apocryphal New Testament, ANT* p.364.
73. *1 Corinthians* 3:19.
74. *Acts* 8:9*ff.*
75. *Acts* 8:13.
76. *Clementine Recognitions* I:54, II:7–12, *CR* pp.179, 196–200; *Clementine Homilies* II:23–24, *CH* pp.42–43.
77. *Mark* 3:22.
78. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* I:23, *AH1* p.86*ff.*
79. Justin Martyr, *First Apology* XXVI, *WJMA* p.29.
80. Justin Martyr, *First Apology* XXVI, *WJMA* p.30; Eusebius, *History of the Church* 3:26, *HC* p.136.
81. Justin Martyr, *First Apology* XXVI, *WJMA* p.29; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* I:23.4, *AH1* p.89.
82. *e.g.* Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* I:23–24, *AH1* pp.89–93; Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* VII, *RAH* pp.265–307; Hegesippus, in Eusebius, *History of the Church* 4:22, *HC* p.182.
83. Eusebius, *History of the Church* 4:7, *HC* p.158; Epiphanius, *Panarion* 2:22–24, *PES* p.55.
84. Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies* VII:17, *WCA2* p.486.
85. Hegesippus, in Eusebius, *History of the Church* 4:22, *HC* p.182.
86. See also: **reincarnation and transmigration (in Christianity)** (4.3).
87. *Jeremiah* 32:14–15.
88. E.S. Drower, *Canonical Prayerbook of the Mandaeans, CPM* pp.vii–viii.
89. Torgny Säve-Söderbergh, *Studies in the Coptic-Manichaean Psalm Book, SCMP* p.85*ff.*
90. E.S. Drower, *Secret Adam, SA* pp.xi–xii, 39–40, 46.
91. E.S. Drower, *Secret Adam, SA* pp.xii–xiii.
92. E.S. Drower, *Secret Adam, SA* pp.xiii–xiv.

93. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 2:29.5.7; see also *Panarion* 1:18.1.1; *cf. PES* pp.42, 116.
94. E.S. Drower, *Secret Adam, SA* pp.xiv–xvi, 111–13.
95. Al-Bīrūnī, *Chronology of Ancient Nations* 208, *CAN* p.190.
96. Al-Bīrūnī, *Chronology of Ancient Nations* 207, *CAN* p.189.
97. Al-Bīrūnī, *Chronology of Ancient Nations* 208, *CAN* p.191.
98. *Manichaean Homilies, MHP* p.44, in *MM* p.38.
99. *Manichaean Homilies, MHP* p.45, in *MM* p.39.
100. Al-Bīrūnī, *Chronology of Ancient Nations* 208, *CAN* p.191.
101. *Manichaean Homilies, MHP* pp.48–67, in *MM* p.42; *cf. Manichaean Psalm Book* CCXXVI, *MPB* pp.18–19.
102. *A Manichaean Psalm-Book*, Part II, ed. and tr. by C.R.C. Allbery *(MPB)*.
103. See also: **reincarnation and transmigration (in Christianity)** (4.3).
104. *e.g.* Plato, *Cratylus* 400c (imprisonment of the soul); *Laws* VI:782.c–d (vegetarianism).
105. Ion of Chios, *Triads*, in Diogenēs Laertius, *Lives of the Philosophers* VIII:8, *EGP* p.82.
106. *cf.* Porphyry, *Life of Pythagoras* 37; Origen, *Against Celsus* I:3, *OCC* p.8; Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies* V:9, *WCA2* pp.254–56.
107. Porphyry, *Life of Pythagoras* 37.
108. *e.g.* Origen, *Against Celsus* V:49, VIII:28–30, *OCC* pp.303, 471–74; Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* VI:XXI, *RAH* pp.220–21; Iamblichus, *Life of Pythagoras* 3, 14, 16, 24, *ILP* pp.6–7, 31, 36, 58.
109. Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* VII:17; *cf. RAH* pp.293–96.
110. Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* VI:20; *cf. RAH* pp.219–20.
111. Empedoclēs, in Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* VII:17, *RAH* p.294.
112. Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* IV:13, *RAH* pp.80–81.
113. Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* VI:47, *RAH* p.259.
114. Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* IX:9, *RAH* p.347.
115. Iamblichus, *Life of Pythagoras* 15, *PL* p.155.
116. See Peter Gorman, *Pythagoras: A Life, PL* p.170.
117. *e.g.* Plato, *Republic* 10:614–19; Aristotle, *On the Heavens* 2906; Plotinus, *Enneads* 5:1.12; Iamblichus, *Life of Pythagoras* 15, *ILP* p.37, *PL* p.155; Porphyry, *Life of Pythagoras* 30; Simplicius, *Commentary on Aristotle's On the Heavens*, in *ILP* p.33.
118. Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies* I:15, *WCA1* pp.396–97.
119. Plutarch, *On Osiris and Isis* 10.
120. Porphyry, *Life of Pythagoras* 12, *PL* p.63.
121. Diogenēs Laertius, *Lives of the Philosophers* 1:24, 36, 39.
122. Aristotle, *Physics* 203b6; Simplicius, *Commentary on Aristotle's "Physics"* 24:13; Plutarch, *Miscellanies* fragment 179.2, in Eusebius, *Preparation for the Gospel* 1:7.16; Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* I:5.
123. Diogenēs Laertius (*Lives of the Philosophers* 8:2) and Porphyry (*Life of Pythagoras* 2, 15) both mention Pythagoras' association with Pherecydēs in their respective biographies; see *PL* p.25.
124. Plotinus, *Enneads* V:1.9, *PEP* p.358.
125. Peter Gorman, *Pythagoras: A Life, PL* p.181*ff.*

126. Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies* I:15, *WCA1* p.399.
127. Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* I:2, 22, *RAH* pp.35, 61.
128. Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies* V:8, *WCA2* p.251.
129. See P. Wheelwright, *Heraclitus, HPW* p.116.
130. Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies* V:8, *WCA2* p.251.
131. Clement of Alexandria, in *HPW* p.116.
132. Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies* VI:2, *WCA2* p.318.
133. Lambridis, *Empedoclēs, EHL* pp.36–37.
134. *e.g.* Plato, *Phaedrus* 229–230, *PPL* p.25.
135. Plato, *Letters* VII:324e; *cf. PET* p.216, *SPE* p.193.
136. Plato, *Phaedo* 64a, *DP1* p.414; *cf. PEA* pp.222–23.
137. Plato, *Phaedo* 64c, *PEA* pp.222–23.
138. Plato, *Phaedo* 64e–65a; *cf. DP1* p.415, *PDS* p.117, *PEA* pp.224–25.
139. Plato, *Phaedo* 67e, *PEA* pp.234–35.
140. Plato, *Phaedo* 69d; *cf. DP1* p.421, *PEA* pp.240–41.
141. Plato, *Phaedo* 67c; *cf. DP1* p.418, *PEA* pp.232–33.
142. Homer, *Iliad* 7:460.
143. Plotinus, in Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus* 3, *PEP* p.civ.
144. Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus* 1, *PEP* p.cii.
145. Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus* 9.
146. Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus* 12.
147. Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus* 11.
148. Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus* 16.
149. Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus* 23, *PEC* p.vi.
150. Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus* 2, *PEC* p.vi.
151. Plotinus, in Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus* 14, *PEP* p.cxiii.
152. *Qur'ān* 35:10.
153. Material on the life and revelations of Muḥammad draws liberally from: Karen Armstrong, *Muḥammad: A Biography of the Prophet, MBP* pp.46, 55, 89; Maxime Rodinson, *Muḥammad, MMR* pp.42, 47, 135, 150, 205; W. Montgomery Watt, *Muḥammad: Prophet and Statesman;* Marmaduke Pickthall, Introduction to *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran.*
154. See also *Qur'ān* 6:125, 39:22.
155. *Qur'ān* 19:1*ff.*
156. Jalāl al-Dīn Suyūṭī, *Itqān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* in *MMR* p.74, in *HGKA* p.163.
157. *Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 1:1.2, in *CEI* p.335; *cf.* in *MP* p.39.
158. *e.g. Qur'ān* 7:156–58.
159. *Qur'ān* 33:50.
160. *e.g.* Maxime Rodinson, *Muḥammad, MMR* pp.134, 176, 194, 205, 213, 254–55, 258, 279.
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162. Rūmī, *Maśnavī* II, *Preface, MJR2* p.221.
163. Al-Qushayrī, in *Kashf al-Maḥjūb* XII:7, *KM* p.167.
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166. Junayd, in *Tadhkirat al-Awliyā'* 2, *TAN2* pp.35–36; *cf.* in *LSN* p.57.

167. *cf.* R.A. Nicholson, *Mystics of Islam, MOI* p.29.
168. Al-Qushayrī, in *Kashf al-Maḥjūb* XII:7, *KM* p.167.
169. *Qur'ān* 18:109.
170. *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad* 2:4.10.
171. *Ṛig Veda* 10:90.
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184. J.D. Cunningham, *A History of the Sikhs, AHS* p.53 (n.3).
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187. *Ādi Granth* 466.
188. *cf.* Hew McLeod, *Sikhism, SHM* pp.43–44.
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197. Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs, HS1* pp.314–317.
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199. Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs, HS1* p.95.
200. Hew McLeod, *Sikhism, SHM* pp.49–50.
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202. Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs, HS1* p.126.
203. Hew McLeod, *Sikhism, SHM* pp.70–72.
204. Kabīr, *Ādi Granth* 871.
205. Guru Arjun, *Ādi Granth* 1075.
206. Guru Nānak, *Ādi Granth* 938.
207. Guru Nānak, *Ādi Granth* 1291.

208. Guru Amardās, *Ādi Granth* 917.
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213. S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy* 1, *IP1* p.447.
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219. Leonard Crow Dog and Richard Erdoes, *Crow Dog, CDF* pp.8–11, 27–39.
220. Richard Erdoes, *American Indian Myths and Legends, AIM* p.19.
221. Henry Crow Dog, in *CDF* pp.53–62.
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225. Black Elk, in *BES* p.7.
226. Black Elk, in *BES* p.22.
227. Black Elk, in *SGBE* p.114.
228. John Neihardt, *The Sixth Grandfather, SGBE* pp.6–14.
229. Black Elk, in *BEF* p.119.
230. Nahua Poetry, in *Firefly in the Night, FIN* p.32.
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234. Pierre Clastres, in *GG* p.19.
235. James Manning, in *A Place for Strangers, PSH* p.127.
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237. C.P. Mountford, *Aboriginal Conception Beliefs, ACB* pp.14–15, 53–55; *cf. BCT* p.35, *MLM* p.27, *NTA* p.25.
238. Noel Wallace, in *Ancestor Spirits, ASC* p.85.
239. Richard Kimber, in *Ancestor Spirits, ASC* p.40.
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241. W.E.H. Stanner, in *Dreamings, DAAA* p.15.
242. Teddy Jampinjinpa, in *A Place for Strangers, PSH* p.50.
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BIOGRAPHIC AND BIBLIOGRAPHIC GLOSSARY



Biographic and Bibliographic Glossary

Brief notes are provided on the texts, mystics and others cited in the *Treasury*. Whether indicated as such or not, many of the dates given for the births and deaths of mystics and others, especially of those earlier than the nineteenth century, can often be regarded as only approximate. Where relevant information is given somewhere else in the *Treasury*, especially in the *Introduction*, the glossary entry may be brief with a 'See' or 'See also:' pointing to the relevant place.

Works consulted include: *The Catholic Encyclopaedia* (Internet edn., 2003), *Collins English Dictionary* (1995), *The Concise Encyclopaedia of Islam* (1989), *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (CD-ROM edn., 2001), *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (1960–97), *Encyclopedia Judaica* (CD-ROM edn., 1997), *Hindi Vishvakosh* (1986), *Hindu World* (Benjamin Walker, 1983), *A History of Sufism in India* (Saiyid Athar Abbas Rizvi, 1997 [1978]), *A Literary History of Persia* (Edward G. Browne, 1969 [1902]), *A Literary History of the Arabs* (R.A. Nicholson, 1996 [1907]), *Nag Hammadi Library in English* (1988), *Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies IV–XXXIII* (1979–95), *The New Jerusalem Bible* (1985), *The Oxford Companion to the Bible* (1993), *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (1983), and a large number of other works.

1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians New Testament texts. *1 Corinthians* is the 'first letter' written by Paul to his Gentile community in Corinth, generally agreed to contain passages from two or more letters sent by Paul from Ephesus around 53–54 CE, when he heard that the community he had founded there was split by factions and disagreements of various kinds (1:10*ff.*). Whether the factions were internal or due to interaction with other Christian groups, possibly gnostic, is unclear. Among other things, Paul discusses the practice of speaking 'in tongues', also advising that in their meetings they should not all try to speak at once (14:1*ff.*), that women should keep silent during the meetings (14:34–35), that they should not use pagan courts to settle disputes between each other (6:1*ff.*), and that they should give up the fornication and even incest that he had heard was common among them (5:1*ff.*). Love of God and one's fellow Christians (13:1*ff.*), as well as explanations of his doctrine, are Paul's keynotes. He also identifies Christ with Wisdom, the divine creative power that existed before the creation of the world. His reference (5:9) to an earlier letter has set scholars searching for indications of it embedded in either *1* or *2 Corinthians,* but the disjointed style of these letters leaves such analysis without any definite conclusions.

2 Corinthians, the 'second letter' written by Paul to his Gentile community in Corinth, is a collection of fragments of letters sent from Macedonia, around 55 CE, about a year after the first such letter *(1 Corinthians).* Its disjointed flow almost certainly arises from the combination of several letters into one, as well as (probably) a later editorial rearrangement of the contents, even the contents of individual letters.

The first of these letters was written after an unsuccessful visit by Timothy to resolve earlier differences in the Corinthian community. Now, further dissensions have occurred due to the presence of Christian teachers who are spreading alternative doctrines, and who have challenged Paul's self-appointed apostolic role. Paul therefore defends his position as an apostle (chaps. 2–7), and expresses his opinion of "false prophets" as "servants of Satan" (chaps. 10–13).

Attempting to reconstruct the sequence of events, it seems that Titus was then sent to Corinth to make a monetary collection to be sent to Jerusalem as a sign of Christian unity and mutual love. He takes with him a letter of reconciliation from Paul (reconstructible from 1:1–24, 2:1–3, 7:5–6, 8:1–24), which also encourages support for the collection, and extols the generosity of the Macedonians by way of example. Later, in a further exhortation to give generously (chap. 9), Paul tells them that he has boasted to the Macedonians of their previous generosity.

See also: **Paul** (1.5).

1 Enoch Also called the *Ethiopic Book of Enoch;* one of the most significant apocalyptic texts; a heterogeneous collection of separate smaller works concerning the biblical Enoch, composed during the second Temple period (C5th–C1st BCE), probably written originally in Hebrew and Aramaic, then translated into Greek and Ethiopic. In it, Enoch shares dream-visions of his spiritual journey, introducing angels and other personalities of the heavenly cosmology; relates non-biblical legends concerning certain personalities such as Noah; also discusses the 'end of days', the heavenly calendar, and the course of the sun, moon and stars, together with a survey of the history of mankind and Israel.

See also: **Enoch**.

1 John, 2 John, 3 John Three New Testament letters written in Greek, and attributed to the apostle John, probably written early in the second century. *1 John* is a circular letter written to the Christian communities of Asia Minor, containing both doctrine and practical advice. Like the gospel, it opens with the statement that the Word *(Logos)* is the primary subject, going on to develop the themes of light (1:5*ff.*), virtue (2:29*ff.*), truth (5:6*ff.*), and espe-

cially the love of God and brotherly love (4:7*ff.*). From the similar style and content of *1 John* to John's gospel, it is commonly assumed that the two were written by the same person, though who he was is uncertain. Unlike the gospel, however, the author adopts a somewhat patronizing and moralizing tone, also speaking in terms of the "last days" when prophesying that an "Antichrist" will appear among them (a doctrine which is absent from the gospel). In fact, says the author "several Antichrists" and "many false prophets" have already appeared within the Christian community, proving that these are the last times (2:18–4:6). The author warns against being deceived by "false prophets", but their teachings are only hinted at, not described. These differences, and some other minor doctrinal variations, cast doubt on the hypothesis that the author of the gospels and the letters was the same.

2 and *3 John* are short letters "from the Elder", though his identity is uncertain. *3 John*, addressed "to my dear friend Gaius", praises Gaius for looking after the spiritual welfare of his particular church (though he is a stranger to them), but castigates a certain "Diotrephēs", who appears to be in charge of the church, for his poor behaviour towards everyone, and for his refusal to accept the authority of the Elder. *2 John* expresses the writer's happiness that members of the community to whom he is writing are living in love, going on to advise against listening to the "Antichrist".

The authenticity of *2* and *3 John* was questioned by the early Church. Origen (*c.*185–254), Eusebius (*c.*265–340) and Jerome (*c.*347–420) all expressed reservations, while the church of Antioch and the Syrian churches declined for a long time to accept them.

See also: **John's Gospel** (1.5).

1 Kings A historical book of the Bible, relating the end of King David's reign (970 BCE) and the accession to the throne of his son, Solomon; recounts stories of Solomon's wisdom and wealth, as well as his oppressive rule, as he built his kingdom; provides a detailed description of the building of the Temple in Jerusalem, and the split of the Israelite kingdom into two: Israel and Judah, with Solomon reigning from Jerusalem, in Judah; introduces the prophets Elijah and Elisha, and relates the continuing saga of the Israelites' corruption, idol worship, and abominable practices under the leadership of degenerate kings in both Judah and Israel.

1 Peter, 2 Peter Two New Testament letters written in accurate and flowing Greek, attributed to the apostle Peter, but generally assumed in modern times to have been written in the early second century, considerably more than 50 years after Peter's death. That both letters purport in their opening address to have been written by Peter supposes some degree of conscious

deception in the mind of the actual writers, presumably to add authority to the message of the letters. The first letter has been more readily accepted as genuine than the second, and doubts concerning its authenticity are relatively recent. *1 Peter* has been subjected to scholarly analysis from a great many viewpoints without any particular consensus of opinion being reached as to its origins. Its proficient Greek, for example (presuming that Peter's Greek would have been rough, at best), can be explained by his use of a scribe and translator, common enough in those times.

1 Peter is addressed to Christians living in the provinces of Asia Minor, most of them converted pagans. The overall theme is fortitude in time of trial, though whether the trial relates to Roman persecution or to the general difficulties of being a Christian in those times is not specified. Like Christ, his followers must endure with patience when their difficulties are the result of their faith and their saintly lives. Love, civil obedience and kindness to all must be the response to evil.

The authenticity of *2 Peter* has always been questionable. There is no evidence that it was accepted before the third century, and Origen (*c.*185–254), Eusebius (*c.*265–340) and Jerome (*c.*347–420) specifically rejected it. There are many reasons for this: the author claims to have written the letter himself (*i.e.* no translator) (1:1); the prediction of Peter's death is made by Jesus to the author (who also claims to have witnessed the transfiguration) (1:14, 16–18); the writer refers pointedly to a previous letter (meaning *1 Peter*) (3:1); the vocabulary is markedly different from *1 Peter;* and the entire chapter 2 is clearly a paraphrase of the New Testament letter, *Jude*. The purpose of the letter is to warn against false teachers and to justify the late arrival of the Second Coming (another reason for its later date). That the letter speaks of "our beloved brother Paul" and refers to his letters as "scripture" (3:15–16) indicates that it was written during the early second century to bolster confidence in the Pauline version of Christianity, and to promote the idea that Peter had ultimately come around to supporting Paul.

See also: **Other New Testament Letters** (1.5).

1 Samuel The first of two biblical books concerning the Hebrew prophet and judge, Samuel (C11th BCE); relates the story of his miraculous birth, his consecration to God's service in the Temple under the high priest, and his subsequent calling to prophecy; describes his leadership of the Israelites in their battles with the Philistines and others, overseeing their transformation into a united nation, anointing Saul as their first king; tells the stories of David and Goliath, David and Jonathan, the eventual conflict between Saul and David, the anointing of David, and death of Samuel, Saul and Jonathan.

1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians New Testament texts; two letters attributed to Paul, written to converts that he had made in the Aegean seaport town of Thessalonica during what was probably his first missionary journey, in the early 50s, in company with Silas and Timothy. After experiencing hostility from the Jewish community, Paul had moved on to Beroea, and thence down the Grecian peninsula to Athens and Corinth. Timothy paid a second visit to the group, returning with encouraging news of their faith under persecution. Paul then sent the letter known as *1 Thessalonians*. He writes affectionately, thanking the community for so readily accepting his teachings. He praises them for their steadfastness in difficult times, advises them to earn their own living, and exhorts them to live holy lives, in brotherly love, without fornication. He assures them that those who have already died "in Christ" will be saved just as much as those who are still alive at the Second Coming. He advises them to be watchful because the "Day of the Lord" can come unexpectedly, at any time. He asks them to support each other, and to be respectful to the teachers in their community.

2 Thessalonians mirrors the first letter so closely that many modern scholars believe it to be a forgery, written at a later date. The most marked differences between the two concern the "Day of the Lord". Contrary to the contents of the first letter, the writer says that the "Day of the Lord" will not come unexpectedly. It will only come after the appearance of the "man of sin", the "lost one", known in later Christian thought as the Antichrist. The writer prefaces his observations with the comment not to believe any letter "purporting to be from us ... to the effect that the Day of the Lord has already come". This is surprising because there is no such statement in Paul's first letter. Though a variety of solutions have been suggested, there is no conclusive resolution to these discrepancies. *2 Thessalonians* concludes by emphasizing that it is a genuine letter, "from me, Paul, these greetings in my own handwriting, which is the mark of genuineness in every letter", an unexpected emphasis which further undermines its credibility.

See also: **Paul** (1.5).

1 Timothy See **pastoral letters**.

2 Enoch Also called the *Slavonic Book of Enoch* and the *Book of the Secrets of Enoch;* an apocryphal work in which the mythological Enoch gives an accounts of his inner, spiritual journey through the seven heavens and the workings of the creation; probably originated with a heterodox Jewish sect during the early Christian period; also shows some Iranian influences; translated from Greek into Slavonic in the eleventh century.

2 John See **1 John**.

2 Kings A historical book of the Bible, relating the story of the death of Elijah the prophet, the succession of Elisha, and his numerous miracles; narrates the history of the successive dynasties of both Jewish kingdoms (Israel and Judah), including the Israelites' worship of *Ba'al* and their following of other local religious practices, while Isaiah and successive prophets seek to set them straight. Eventually, the kingdom of Judah is defeated by the Babylonians, the Temple is burnt, and the people are exiled to Babylon.

2 Peter See **1 Peter**.

2 Samuel The second of two biblical books concerning the Hebrew prophet and judge, Samuel (C11th BCE); relates the life of King David (reigned 1010–970 BCE), the conflict between the house of David and house of Saul, David's sin with Bathsheba, and the consequent tragedy befalling his house through the actions of his sons Amnon and Absalom; recounts the story of the battles between the Israelites and the Philistines; introduces David's son, Solomon.

2 Timothy See **pastoral letters**.

3 Baruch Also known as the Greek *Apocalypse of Baruch;* an apocalyptic work by a Christian writer, describing the journey of Jeremiah's scribe, Baruch, through the seven heavens. Having witnessed the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE, Baruch questions the goodness of God, and is granted this heavenly journey as a means of consolation. He meets many creatures in monstrous form, comes to know certain secrets concerning the tower of Babel and the garden of Eden, etc., learns about the workings of the universe, and sees the higher heavens where righteous souls reside.

Scribe and loyal companion to the prophet Jeremiah at the time of the Babylonian exile, Baruch was the actual writer of all of Jeremiah's prophecies and oracles, and probably of his biographical narrative. He is portrayed in the book of *Jeremiah* as courageous and loyal in declaring the truth of God's word, even when it displeased the monarchy and priests. In non-canonical legends, he is regarded as a priest and prophet in his own right. Several books of apocalyptic visions are attributed to him.

3 Enoch Originally called the *Hekhalot* ('Realms' or 'Palaces'), later published as *3 Enoch* or the *Hebrew Book of Enoch;* an account by Rabbi Ishma'el of Enoch's inner journey and transformation into the angel *Metatron;* part of the *merkavah* (chariot) literature of the rabbinic period (200 BCE – 400 CE).

3 John See **1 John**.

4 Ezra Also known as the *Apocalypse of Ezra;* a book of visions pseudo-epigraphically ascribed to Ezra the Scribe, written between 95 and 100 CE, probably in Erez, Israel; extant in Latin, Syriac, Ethiopic, two separate Arabic versions, Armenian, Georgian, some Greek fragments, and a Coptic fragment; regarded as one of the best examples of Jewish apocalyptic literature, a post-biblical genre purporting to reveal mysteries beyond the scope of intellectual and sensory knowledge, including secrets of the heavens and hells, of the creation and the world order, the Day of Judgment, etc.; contains an analysis of theological problems arising from the destruction of Jerusalem, including the nature of man, good and evil, sin and responsibility, with eschatological revelations and descriptions of the heavenly regions. The book is a part of the *Apocrypha,* an appendix to Roman Catholic Bibles, but not a part of the Hebrew canon, nor printed in Protestant Bibles.

Aaron ben Moses ha-Levi (1766–1828) Lived in Starosielce in Poland; a disciple of Rabbi Shne'ur Zalman of Lyady (founder of *ḤaBaD* Hasidism); the leader of a divergent group within *ḤaBaD* Hasidism; remained a close friend of Shne'ur Zalman for 30 years, but was estranged for both personal and doctrinal reasons from Shne'ur Zalman's son and successor, Dov Ber.

After the death of Shne'ur Zalman in 1813, Rabbi Aaron became leader of the majority of the *ḤaBaD* community. The chief difference between the two groups concerned their approach to prayer and religious life. Contrasted with the intellectualism of the main *ḤaBaD* movement, Rabbi Aaron emphasized exaltation in meditation and devotional prayer as more conducive to the love of God, an approach more in keeping with the mainstream trends of Hasidism.

His most important work, *Sha'arei ha-Yiḥud ve-ha-Emunah* ('Gates of Union and Faith', 1820), is a commentary that completes the second (incomplete) part of the *Tanya,* Shne'ur Zalman's main work. His other writings include *Petaḥ ha-Teshuvah* ('Doorway to Repentance', 1821), with a foreword in which he explains his approach, and which he regards as the path actually taught by Shne'ur Zalman; *Sha'arei 'Avodah* ('Gates of Service', 1821); and *'Avodat ha-Levi* ('Service of the Levite'), a collection of sermons, correspondence, and other miscellaneous writings published posthumously (1866). Some of the most beautiful *ḤaBaD* devotional melodies are also attributed to him. After his death, the *ḤaBaD* movement was continued by his grandson Menaḥem Mendel of Lubavitch (1789–1866).

Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq (*b.c.*573–*d.*634) The first *Khalīfah* (Caliph, Successor); friend, a father-in-law and successor of Muḥammad; credited with making the first collection of material that subsequently became the *Qur'ān.*

See also: **The Death of Muḥammad** (1.10), **The Qur'ān** (1.10), **Sufi Orders and Teachings** (1.10).

Abulafia, Abraham ben Samuel (*b.*1240, *d.* after 1291) A Spanish Kabbalist; born in Saragossa; moved at an early age to Tudela, in what was then the independent kingdom of Navarra (divided in the sixteenth century between Spain and France); lost his father when he was 18, moving soon after to Palestine; began a search for the mythical river, Sambatyon, beside which the last traces of the ten lost tribes of Israel were believed to have survived, but was prevented from getting any further than Acre (in northern Israel) by the Muslim-Christian wars (the Crusades); travelled to Greece, where he married; moved on to Italy, spending some time in Capua, studying Moses Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed* with Hillel ben Samuel of Verona; introduced to the Kabbalah by Baruch Togarmi, one of the many commentators on the *Sefer Yeẓirah* ('Book of Formation'), the oldest known Kabbalist text; made a thorough study of the *Sefer Yeẓirah* and its commentaries in Barcelona, during 1271; believing himself the recipient of prophetic inspiration, began to teach to a small group of students; left Spain in 1273, travelling through Italy, Sicily and Greece, during which time he wrote a number of treatises on his mystical doctrines, including *Sitrei Torah* ('Secrets of the *Torah*'), and a commentary on *Guide of the Perplexed* in which he credits Moses Maimonides with Kabbalistic tendencies; was living in Patras, in Greece, in 1279, where he continued his writing, using a pseudonym that corresponds to the numerical value of his real name.

In 1280, Abulafia was again in Capua, where he attracted a circle of younger students. During the summer of that year, led on by an "inner voice", he went to Rome to petition Pope Nicholas III to alleviate the sufferings and persecution of the Jews. In response, the pope sentenced Abulafia to death by burning, but he luckily escaped execution when the pope died in August. Released after a month in prison, Abulafia went to Messina, in Sicily, where (among other treatises), he wrote *Or ha-Sekhel* ('Light of the Spirit'), concerning the mystical symbolism of the tetragrammaton (Y-H-W-H), the four Hebrew consonants comprising the name of God, *Yahweh;* and *Oẓar Eden Ganuz* ('Treasury of the Hidden Eden'), which contains autobiographical information.

In Sicily, Abulafia also announced that messianic era would begin in 1290, a teaching that met with a mixed response. While some made arrangements to emigrate to Israel, others strongly opposed him. Complaints were brought before the most influential rabbi of the time, Solomon ben Abraham Adret of Barcelona, that Abulafia claimed to be the Messiah. Rabbi Solomon denounced him as an impostor, and Abulafia was forced to flee to the remote island of Comino (near Malta). Here, he wrote *Sefer ha-Ot* ('Book of the Letter'), the only one of his prophetic works to have survived. Other works from this period include a defence of himself and his doctrines against his opponents and the censure of Rabbi Solomon. In 1289, he wrote a commentary on the *Torah,* much of which is extant, and a commentary on the

Sefer Yezirah, which contains some pointed criticism of Christianity. His most renowned work, *Imrei Shefer* ('Sayings of Grace'), was completed in 1291, shortly before his death.

Abulafia's doctrines diverged from the earlier Kabbalah. Based upon the ten *sefirot* (the divine emanations by which the creation came into being), he elaborated on the teachings of the German Hasidic school begun by Eleazar ben Judah of Worms (*c.*1160–1238). There are also parallels between his teachings and those of both Hindu *yoga* and Islamic Sufism. His methods, intended to induce ecstatic mystical experiences, included complex practical techniques involving the combination and permutation of numbers, letters and words. These included *zeruf* (letter combinations of the divine names), *gematria* (Hebrew words reduced to their numerical values) and *notarikon* (letters of a word as the abbreviation of a sentence). By these means, he believed that human beings could commune with the Divine and receive prophetic inspiration. Thus, individual human intelligence could receive the influx of the divine Intelligence. Abulafia called this path the Way of the divine Name or the Way of *Sefer Yezirah*.

Abulafia disagreed with the use of the divine names for anything other than truly spiritual purposes. Although occasionally opposed by posterity, his work has generally been highly regarded. He was one of the most influential individuals in the development of Kabbalistic doctrines prior to Isaac Luria of Safed (1534–72), especially among the sixteenth-century Kabbalists of Safed. His work, the *Sefer Ḥayyei ha-'Olam ha-Ba* ('Book of the Life of the Future World'), also known as *Sefer ha-Shem* ('Book of the Name'), which contains precise instructions on the use of the 72-letter name of God in mystical meditation, has been widely read. His most well-known disciple was Joseph ben Abraham Gikatilla (*c.*1248–1305).

See also: **The Kabbalah** (1.4).

Abū Sa'īd Faḍl Allāh (*c.*967–1049) Full name, Abū Sa'īd Faḍl Allāh ibn Abī al-Khayr; born in Mayhanah, now Mehnah, in Khurāsān, in northeastern Iran; the son of a Sufi; from an early age, spiritual influences were important in his life; settled in Mayhanah, where he lived as an ascetic, working in the service of the poor; gained fame as a clairvoyant, and practised ecstatic dancing.

Acts of John Also called the *History of John;* an early- or mid-second-century Christian composition, attributed by Photius (*c.*810–895), Patriarch of Constantinople, to Leucius Charinus, supposedly a disciple of the apostle John, though nothing is known about him; purports to be an account of the travels, miracles and teachings of the apostle, containing a mixture of gnostic discourses, sayings, hymns etc., together with anecdotal and allegorical stories;

condemned by the Second Council of Nicaea (787) as subversive to orthodox Christianity.

See also: **Apocryphal Sources** (1.5).

Acts of Matthew One of the later apocryphal *Acts*, of uncertain date, purporting to recount the missionary journeys of the apostle Matthew to the "country of the *kahenat* (priests)"; extant in Ethiopic and Arabic, with some variations between the two; frequently mentions the light of the heavenly worlds, and uses a number of metaphors for Jesus as the Creative Word, including the Tree of Life, *manna*, the Ladder which reaches to heaven, and so on.

Acts of Paul A mid- to late-second-century pseudo-epigraphic composition purporting to be an account of the teachings and travels of Paul; includes, for example, a story reminiscent of the Greek fable of Androclēs and the lion, in which Paul escapes from wild beasts in the arena at Ephesus by recognizing a lion he had earlier baptized; said by the Church father Tertullian (*fl.* 190–220) to have been written shortly before his time by a Christian presbyter of Asia in honour of Paul. However, the deception was discovered and the presbyter degraded from office. Only about half of the book is extant, mostly in a selection of Greek, Coptic, Syriac, Armenian, Slavonic and Latin fragments, demonstrating that the book had a wide range of popularity despite its known dubious origins. Consists of three parts: the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, an apocryphal letter from the Corinthians to Paul and his reply, and the *Martyrdom of Paul*.

See also: **Apocryphal Sources** (1.5).

Acts of Peter A mid- to late-second-century composition, purporting to relate some of the sayings and discourses (often gnostic in content), and deeds (often miraculous) of the apostle Peter; includes a story in which Peter raises a dead herring to life; of unknown authorship, modelled on the earlier *Acts of John*. Probably written in Greek, the majority of the extant text is found in a seventh-century Latin manuscript, with another short episode in Coptic. A large portion of the original – perhaps about one third – appears to be missing.

See also: **Apocryphal Sources** (1.5).

Acts of Peter and the Twelve Apostles A short text from the Nag Hammadi codices in which Peter and the apostles are set as historical characters in a parable or allegory concerning a pearl merchant, and his gift of a pearl,

which he gives at no charge to those who will relinquish the world and enter his city of "nine gates", through the tenth gate, "the head". In the story, the pearl merchant is revealed as the Saviour, Jesus.

Acts of the Apostles A New testament text; the second of the two books written (in Greek), purporting to be written by the author of Luke's gospel, picking up the story of Jesus and his apostles where the gospel ends; probably written in Rome between 80 and 90 CE; begins with an account of the descent of the Holy Spirit on the apostles at Pentecost; continues with a record of the apostles' early ministry, chiefly of Peter, culminating in the story of the first martyr, Stephen, who is stoned by an angry crowd, incited by "a young man, … whose name was Saul" (7:58). After his introduction, Saul (alias Paul) occupies the remainder of the book. In fact, it seems as if Peter's role in *Acts* is to give credence to Paul's mission at a time when Paul's position was still in doubt. Some scholars have even suggested that *Acts* was not written by the author of the Luke's gospel, but in the second century, to bolster faith in Paul's version of Christianity. The story ends, somewhat abruptly, after Paul has successfully preached in Rome, the acknowledged centre of the Gentile world at that time.

Paul's itinerary in *Acts* ties in tolerably well with the journeys mentioned in his letters, although there are some conflicts, and none of the miracles attributed to him in *Acts* are echoed in his letters. Interestingly, neither *Acts* nor Luke's gospel demonstrate any awareness of the content of Paul's letters. Less constrained by his sources than in the gospel, the writer follows the classical approach to history, in which a good story with eloquent, dramatic and invented speeches was deemed more important than factual accuracy. For this reason, the impromptu speeches in *Acts* attributed to Peter, Stephen, Paul and others are generally presumed to be the writer's own inventions.

The sources of *Acts* and how the author uses them are more difficult to determine than those of his gospel, for there are no other versions of the same material. *Acts* is curious for its use of 'we' in chapters 16, 20–21 and 27–28, where it relates events in the first person, the latter two chapters narrating the story of Paul's journey to Rome. But the general scholarly opinion is that the compiler was simply being faithful to his source, uncharacteristically copying it across as he found it. *Acts* is also valuable as the only available window onto the very early Church.

See also: **Luke, Paul** (1.5).

Acts of Thomas A second- or third-century Christian composition of unknown authorship, comprising strange tales and discourses, said to be the history of the apostle Judas Thomas in India; includes the allegorical poem, the

Robe of Glory or *Hymn of the Pearl* among its confused, and largely gnostic, contents. The *Acts of Thomas* and the *Acts of John* were adopted by the followers of Mānī and later Manichaeans.

See also: **Apocryphal Sources** (1.5).

Ādi Granth (Pu) *Lit.* primal *(ādi)* scripture *(granth);* also called the *Granth Sāhib* and the *Guru Granth Sāhib;* contains the *shabds* (hymns) of the first five *Gurus* and the ninth *Guru* in the line of Guru Nānak, together with those of 30 other Saints *(Sants)* and devotees from various parts of India, from both Hindu and Islamic traditions; compiled in 1604 by Guru Arjun, comprising in all around 6,000 *shabds,* to which Guru Gobind Singh added 116 *shabds* written by Guru Tegh Bahādur. The entire text is written in a variety of verse forms, set in 31 musical measures *(rāgas).* There are a number of recensions of which the 1430–page recension is the form approved during twentieth century by the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) in Amritsar.

Following a custom common to many ancient cultures, Guru Nānak's first four successors have frequently written in his name, and many of the *shabds* of his four successors are attributed to Nānak in the final couplet.

See also: **Sikhism** (1.11).

Ādi Purāṇa (S) *Lit.* first *(ādi) Purāṇa;* a ninth-century Jain mythological and religious text, written in Sanskrit by Jinasenāchāryā and his disciple Guṇabhadra; forms the first part of the *Mahā Purāṇa* (Great *Purāṇa*), the second or later *(uttara)* part being the *Uttara Purāṇa,* composed entirely by Guṇabhadra. There is also another *Mahā Purāṇa,* written by Pushpadanta in the Apabhraṃsha Prakrit dialect, also divided into two parts, called by the same names. The *Ādi Purāṇa* is also another name for the *Brahma Purāṇa,* one of 18 Hindu *Purāṇas.*

aggadah *Lit.* discourse, telling; any non-legal discussion in the *Talmud;* generally used to mean rabbinic narratives, including legends and stories of great rabbis; also includes folklore, moral and ethical teachings, etc. The term has taken on the broad meaning of legend.

Aitareya Upanishad (S) Consists of the fourth, fifth and sixth chapters of the second book of the *Aitareya Āraṇyaka,* belonging to the *Ṛig Veda;* attributed to Mahidāsa Aitareya, said in the *Chhāndogya Upanishad* (3:16.7) to have lived to the age of 116. The text is concerned with the nature of the *Ātman* (supreme Self or Soul), the creation of the worlds, the incarnation of the *Ātman* as a *jīva,* and the means of realizing immortality; contains the

great Vedic dictum, "*Prajñānaṃ Brahma* (Consciousness is *Brahman*)" (3:1.3).

See also: **Upanishads**.

'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (*b.c.*600–*d.*661) The cousin and son-in-law of Muḥammad; the fourth *Khalīfah* (Caliph, Successor), after the murder of the third Caliph, 'Uthmān, in 656; murdered by a member of the breakaway faction, the *Khawārij*; believed by Shi'ite Muslims to have been the first Sufi.

See also: **The Death of Muḥammad** (1.10), **Sufism** (1.10), **Sufi Orders and Teachings** (1.10).

Allogenēs A fictional, revelational discourse from the Coptic Nag Hammadi codices, in which the central character, Allogenēs, receives a mystic revelation of the inner realms of creation, recording the experience for the benefit of his 'son', Messos. *Allogenēs* (Gk) means 'stranger,' 'alien' or 'one of another race', alluding to the soul, incarnate in matter, who feels like a stranger in a foreign land. Several revelational gnostic texts, including one called *Allogenēs*, are mentioned by the Neo-Platonist, Porphyry, in his *Life of Plotinus* (16). Plotinus is opposed to the teachings of at least some of the gnostic schools, especially their dualism, jargon and fanciful cosmogonies.

Alma Rishaia Rba (Md) *Lit.* great *(rba)* first world *(alma rishaia)*; a Naṣoraean (Mandaean) text, composed of various fragments of earlier writings, concerning the mystery of creation and the Naṣoraean cosmogony, together with some of the secret gnostic teachings once imparted only to initiated priests.

Alphabet of Rabbi Akiva In Hebrew, *Alef Bet de-Rabbi Akiva* or *Otiyyot de-Rabbi Akiva* ('Letters of Rabbi Akiva'); an eighth- or ninth-century (CE) commentary on the Hebrew alphabet, explaining the mystical powers and meanings ascribed to each letter, and containing discussions of the creation, the *merkavah* (chariot), the seven heavens, and the seven hells or depths.

Alvarez de Paz, Diego (1560–1620) Born at Toledo, in Spain; a well-known mystic of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits), which he joined at the age of 18; appointed professor of theology and philosophy at the Jesuit College of Lima (in Peru) at the age of 24; ordained as a priest in 1586, and for a while considered leaving the Jesuits, and adopting a life of solitary contemplative prayer; persuaded otherwise by Aquaviva (1543–1615), head of the Jesuits, who wrote to Alvarez that there was a place in the Society of Jesus for those with a strong inclination towards study and prayer; later became Rector of

the College of Lima, as well as those at Cuzco (Peru), Quito (Equador) and Chuquizaca (Bolivia); appointed Vice-Provincial of Tucumán (Argentina), and finally Provincial of Peru; died at Potosí, in south Bolivia, one of the highest cities in the world (4,066 metres, 13,340 feet).

Alvarez de Paz disclosed to his confessor that in 25 years of busy life, his union with God had never been interrupted. Sometimes, during his sermons, he would become so divinely intoxicated that he had to be carried from the pulpit. The fame of his sanctity in South America was so great that when he was brought to Potosí, close to death, the entire city turned out to receive his blessing. When he died, 100,000 men working at the silver mines stopped work, to help with the funeral rites.

Alvarez de Paz wrote three large books, each over 1,000 pages: *De vita spirituali ejusque perfectione* ('On the Spiritual Life and Its Perfection', 1608), *De exterminatione mali et promotione boni* ('On the Elimination of Evil and the Promotion of Good', 1613), and *De inquisitione pacis sive de studio orationis* ('On the Quest for Peace or On the Study of Language', 1611). These encyclopaedic works deal analytically with the various stages of prayer, the active life, the contemplative life, and vocal and mental prayer. They are comprehensive manuals for the spiritual life, describing little – if anything – of his own mystical experience. His works are also remarkable for never quoting any of the previous Spanish mystics. His main sources are the Bible, the early fathers, Dionysius, Richard of St Victor and a few others.

Amīr Khusrau Dihlavī (1253–1325) A thirteenth-century Indo-Persian poet, statesman and court musician of Delhi, who lived at the royal court from 1296 to 1316; a disciple of Niẓām al-Dīn Awliyā'; regarded as the originator of the classical *tarānah* melodies, as well as *qawl (qawwālī),* the classical form of Sufi vocal music; also credited with inventing the sitar, although he does not mention it in his writings; wrote mainly in Persian, but also believed to have been one of the first to use Hindi for literary work.

Ammonius Saccas (*c.*175–242) A third-century CE Greek philosopher-mystic of Alexandria of whom little is known; of humble origins, believed to have earned his living as a porter, hence his epithet *Saccas* (sack-bearer); also known as the God-taught *(Theodidaktos);* a modest man who taught universal brotherhood, the essential unity of all religions, and the study of philosophy as a living experience. Among those who attended his discourses, in preference to those of more learned philosophers, were the Roman historian and statesman Herennius Dexippus (*c.*210–270), the Christian theologian Origen (*c.*185–254), the Greek rhetorician and philosopher Cassius Longinus (*c.*213–273), and the Neo-Platonist Plotinus (*c.*205–270); said by Porphyry to have been raised by his parents as a Christian.

Amos A prophet in the northern kingdom of Israel during the eighth century BCE; the *Book of Amos* is the third book of the twelve Minor Prophets according to the Hebrew Bible, falling between *Joel* and *Obadiah.* According to the text, Amos was a herdsman from Tokea, who prophesied the catastrophes about to befall the people of Israel as a result of their social and moral corruption.

Amṛita Bindu Upanishad (S) *Lit. Upanishad* of the drop *(bindu)* of nectar *(amṛita)* or immortal *(amṛita)* drop; also called the *Brahma Bindu Upanishad* (*lit. Upanishad* of the drop of *Brahman*); belongs to the *Yajur Veda;* expounds on the mind as both the cause of the soul's bondage and the means of liberation through the knowledge of *Brahman.*

See also: **Upanishads**.

Angela of Foligno (1248–1309) Born and died at Foligno, Italy; joined the Franciscans as a Tertiary Hermit after a wayward youth; lived a quiet life of solitude and penance with a religious companion, near the Church of the Friars Minor at Foligno. Angela became known through her spiritual autobiography *(Book of Divine Consolation),* dedicated to her confessor, Brother Arnaldo, and probably edited by him, first published in Italian (translated from the Latin of Arnaldo) in 1510. Her initial motivation to adopt a life of penance was fear of the punishment she would have to face for all her sins. Her progress towards the contemplative love of God which she ultimately attained is charted in her book, as she passes through a spectrum of emotional states upon the way. Throughout her life, she appears to oscillate between a deep and troubled insight into her own imperfections in which she feels far away from God, and a blissful recognition of His divine presence within her.

Annie Besant (1847–1933) A British citizen, born in London; wife of an Anglican clergyman, separated in 1873; advocate of many unorthodox causes; associated for many years with Charles Bradlaugh, freethinker, atheist and social reformer, promoting the rights of the individual; an early advocate of birth control; a foremost Fabian socialist (non-revolutionary socialists) in the late 1880s, influenced by George Bernard Shaw; became a member of the Theosophical Society in 1889, writing and lecturing extensively, her works still being regarded as among the principal expositions of theosophy; international president of the Theosophical Society from 1907 until her death in 1933, living mostly at the Society headquarters in Adyar; active in humanitarian and educational work in India; promoted the cause of Indian independence, founding the Indian Home Rule League in 1916; sponsor of Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895–1986), whom she believed was born to be a world teacher, before his rejection of formal theosophy in 1929.

Anqaravī, Ismā'īl ibn Aḥmad Rusūkh al-Dīn Bayrāmī (*d.*1631) A Turkish Sufi, writer and well-known *Mevlevī Shaykh;* also called Rusūkhī, a pen name he used for his poetry; born in Ankara, now the capital of Turkey; joined the *Bayrāmīyah* Sufi order, but was unable to continue his studies due to the worsening of chronic cataracts; went to Konya (the city of Rūmī's tomb), where he met the head *Shaykh* of the *Mevlevīs* and the spiritual descendant of Rūmī, Bostān Chelebī (*d.*1630), who was able to cure his cataracts; was accepted as a disciple, and completed the *Mevlevī* 1,001-day retreat; eventually became head *Shaykh* of the *Galata Mevlevī* centre in Istanbul, a position he retained for 21 years; died and was buried in Istanbul.

Anqaravī is the author of the most highly esteemed Ottoman Turkish commentary on Rūmī's *Maśnavī,* which he called *Majmū'ah al-Laṭā'if wa-Maṭmūrah al-Ma'ārif* ('Collected Subtleties and the Storehouse of Mystic Knowledge'). First published in 1806, it has been translated into Arabic (abridged) and Persian, but not into English. It consists of a line by line translation of the *Maśnavī,* along with commentary, and was regarded by R.A. Nicholson, well-known English translator of the *Maśnavī,* as the most useful commentary available. The work was so highly regarded that it was the primary text studied by members of the *Mevlevī* order ('whirling dervishes'), in order to master the meaning of the *Maśnavī.* Those appointed as *Maśnavī*-reciters or lecturers received a written certificate of mastery of Anqaravī's commentary.

Anqaravī's work has been criticized on the grounds that he interpreted the *Maśnavī* from the viewpoint of the school of Ibn 'Arabī, a system largely ignored by both Rūmī and his Master, Shams-i Tabrīz; that he selected a poor text of the *Maśnavī* from which to work; that he included a forged 'seventh book' in his work; and that his knowledge of Persian was limited, leading him to miss the meaning of many Persian idioms.

Anṣārī al-Harawī-i Harāt, Abū Ismā'īl 'Abd Allāh al- (*c.*1006–89) Born in Kuhandiz, the citadel of Herāt (Harāt), Persia (now in Afghanistan); also known as Khwājah 'Abd Allāh Anṣārī, as *Pīr-i Harāt* (Master of Herāt) and as *Shaykh al-Islām* (leader of Muslims); by the age of nine, said to have known everything concerning religion and philosophy understood by the wisest men of Herāt; a disciple of al-Kharaqānī; exiled from Herāt several times, also spending 10 years of his life in jail due to opposition and jealousy. Proficient in both Persian and Arabic, Anṣārī composed 6,000 verses in Arabic on the spiritual life, and four of his books in Persian are still extant.

His works are considered masterpieces of Persian literature. They include *Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣūfīyah* ('Categories of Sufi'), *Manāzil al-Sā'irīn* ('Wayfarers' Stages'), *Munājāt* ('Invocations'), and *Dhamm al-Kalām wa-Ahlih* ('The Censure of Theology and Theologians').

Antony the Great (*c*.251–356) Born at Koma, near al-Minya (on the Nile), in Middle Egypt; a Christian ascetic, regarded as the founder of Christian monasticism; the orphan child of wealthy parents; left home at the age of 20 to join a group of ascetics, giving away all his possessions; a disciple of Paul of Thēbes.

Seeking solitude, Antony moved deeper into the desert, to a mountain by the Nile known as Pispir (now Dayr al-Maymūn). Here, his legendary combat with the devil took place, famous in Christian theology, iconography, literature and art, especially the paintings of Hiëronymus Bosch. His biographer, Athanasius (*c*.296–373), Bishop of Alexandria, describes the conflict as taking the form of seductive or horrible visions: sometimes as a monk bringing bread during a fast, or as wild animals, women or soldiers, occasionally beating him and leaving him for dead. Increasingly, Antony instructed and shepherded the ascetics who had gathered around him into the first monastic community. With the end of Roman persecution of the Christians (Edict of Milan, 313), he moved to the eastern desert, to a mountain between the Red Sea and the Nile, where the monastery of Dayr Marī Antonios still exists. Sometimes, he would cross the desert to revisit Pispir. He died at Dayr Marī in 356, probably in his nineties.

See also: **Traditional Christian Mysticism** (1.5).

Aphrahat the Persian Sage A fourth-century Persian Christian, of whom little is known; his sole surviving work is his 22 *Demonstrations* (discourses), written in Syriac, each on a particular topic, 22 being the number of letters in the Syriac alphabet; popular in the early Syriac-speaking Christian community. The first 10 – *Concerning Faith, Love, Fasting, Prayer, Wars, Monks, Penitents, The Resurrection, Humility* and *Pastors* – are dated by the author to the year 648 from the era of Alexander the Great (311 BCE), *i.e.* 337 CE. The remaining 12 are similarly dated to 655 (*i.e.* 344 CE), and a supplemental *Demonstration (Concerning the Grape)* to 345 CE.

Apocalypse of Adam A short gnostic Nag Hammadi text of uncertain date, possibly first or second century CE, containing no specifically Christian elements; set as a traditional revelation given to Adam by three heavenly visitors, and related by Adam to his son, Seth; describes the fall of man, the preservation of the knowledge that saves despite the attempts of the creator-god to destroy mankind, and the third coming of a Saviour, the "Illuminator".

Apocalypse of Elijah A biblical apocryphal text, included in several lists of Christian books from around the sixth century CE; extant only as fragments in Latin, which presents apocalyptic visions of the torments of the soul in

hell. At least two later books of the same name exist, in Coptic and Hebrew, incorporating earlier material of the same nature.

Apocalypse of Paul A short gnostic Nag Hammadi text, set as a traditional revelation describing Paul's ascent through ten heavens, under the guidance of a "little child" (symbolizing Christ), also called the Holy Spirit. The revelation interprets Paul's description of his conversion (*Galatians* 1:11–17, 21–2), and his description of a heavenly ascent (*2 Corinthians* 12:2–4), with the addition of popular Greek and Babylonian elements; also contains anti-Jewish elements in that the deity of the seventh heaven (depicted as an old man on a shining throne) is hostile, and tries to prevent Paul's further ascent.

apocryphal literature A class of ancient literature specifically excluded from the canonical or accepted scriptures. Hence, particularly, the Old Testament apocrypha and the New Testament apocrypha, each being a wide and diffuse body of literature. *The Apocrypha* is a specific selection of 14 books included as an appendix to the Greek *Septuagint* and the Latin *Vulgate*, but not included in the Hebrew canon or printed in Protestant Bibles.

See also: **canonical literature**.

Apocryphon of John A significant gnostic and text from the Nag Hammadi library, probably from the second century, set as a mythological revelation given to the apostle John by the "image" or spiritual form of Jesus. John is feeling downhearted after the criticism of Jesus by a Pharisee, when suddenly the "heavens open" and John sees Jesus simultaneously as a youth, an old man and a servant. The text first describes the emanation of light-beings (including Christ and *Sophia*) from the supreme Deity – the "Monad" (a Pythagorean term) or "ineffable Light". The fall of man then takes place when *Sophia* (*lit.* Wisdom) creates the monstrous creator-god, *Yaldabaoth*, without divine permission. *Yaldabaoth* creates angels to rule the creation and aid in the creation of man, and is tricked into bringing man to life by breathing some of his light-power into man. The struggle for possession of human souls between the powers of light and darkness then begins. To prevent man's escape, the evil powers imprison him in material bodies, which require sex for their propagation. Finally, the Saviour, Christ, is sent to rescue humanity by reminding them of their heavenly home. Those who accept him, and live the right kind of life, are saved; others are reincarnated until they acquire *gnosis*.

Archie Fire Lame Deer (1935–2001) A Lakota (Sioux) traditional Native American; son of John Fire Lame Deer, and great-grandson of the original

Lame Deer (Tahca Ushte) who was killed in 1877 by US Army soldiers under the command of General Nelson (Bear Coat) Miles.

See **Some Recent Native Americans** (1.14).

Aristotle (Gk. Aristotelēs) (384–322 BCE) A Greek natural philosopher and scientist whose writings cover all aspects of human knowledge as understood in the Graeco-Mediterranean world of his time, including physics, chemistry, biology, zoology, botany, psychology, politics, ethics, history, logic, metaphysics, literature and rhetoric. Born in the small Greek town of Stagira (in Macedonia), to Nicomachus, court physician, from whom he probably learnt the fundamentals of biology and medicine; lost his father when still young, becoming a ward of Proxenus, probably a relative; went to Plato's Academy in Athens in 367, where he stayed for 20 years, becoming one its notable members; left the Academy shortly after Plato's death in 347, and began a period of travel in the company of Xenocratēs of Chalcedon; invited to Assus, on the Asian side of the Aegaean, by Hermeias of Atarneus (a Greek mercenary and adventurer who ruled northwestern Asia Minor as a Persian vassal), to found an academy on the same principles as Plato's; married the daughter of Hermeias, who did not live long; found another companion, who outlived him; after three years at Assus, moved to the neighbouring island of Lesbos, where he founded a philosophical centre, again modelled on Plato's Academy, and began a detailed study of biology, researching both plant and animal life.

Around 343, Aristotle – then in his early 40s – accepted the invitation of Philip II of Macedon go to his capital, Pella, to tutor his 13-year-old son, Alexander (later, Alexander the Great). As the leading Greek intellectual, his instructions were to prepare Alexander for life as a military commander. However, his influence on the young conqueror-to-be is believed to have been minimal, and the two disagreed in many fundamental ways.

After three years, around 339, Aristotle returned to his paternal home at Stagira, where he continued his philosophical pursuits, accompanied by Theophrastus and other students of Plato. In 335, aged nearly 50, he returned to Athens, where Xenocratēs, his old friend and associate in biological research, was appointed president of the Academy. Soon after his arrival, Aristotle opened a school in the Lyceum, a gymnasium on the outskirts of Athens, attached to the temple of Apollo Lyceus. In association with a number of scholars, the next 12 years were occupied with research and teaching in all branches of philosophy and science. While the scientific interests of the Academy lay more with mathematics, the Lyceum focused on biology and history.

The death of Alexander in 323 resulted in a brief but intense anti-Macedonian feeling in Athens. Feeling in danger, Aristotle left for his mother's

estate in Chalcis on the island of Euboea. The following year, aged 62 or 63, he died from a stomach illness. He is said to have observed that he had left Athens to prevent the Athenians from sinning twice against philosophy, alluding to the earlier demise of Socratēs.

The stories associated with Aristotle depict him as a kind and affectionate man, with little sense of self-importance. This is born out by his will, which refers to his happy domestic life, and makes good provision for both his children and his servants.

Aristotle was a prolific writer, though not all of his works have survived. Often described as the father of Western intellectual thought, his work was the basis of Christian and Islamic intellectual thought until the end of the seventeenth century. Throughout the intellectual revolutions that followed, his basic concepts have remained embedded in Western thinking. Even today, though modern science has far outstripped his observations and theories, Aristotle's analytical approach remains at its foundation, while his study of zoology was not surpassed until the nineteenth century. His complete system of formal logic (Aristotelian syllogistic) was regarded for centuries as the last word on the subject, and his ideas on ethics, politics, metaphysics and the philosophy of science remain a part of the modern debate on these topics.

Arnobius A fourth-century Christian convert from Africa; taught rhetoric at Sicca Veneria during the rule of Diocletian (ruled 284–305), the last the Roman emperor to instigate a major persecution of the Christians; born a pagan, but had converted to Christianity by 300. Arnobius is remembered for his *Adversus nationes* ('Against the Pagans'), written to convince the local bishop of his faith. Arranged in seven 'books', the work first answers pagan criticisms of Christianity, and continues by denigrating Neo-Platonism, anthropomorphism, heathen mythology and various forms of pagan worship.

Āruṇeya Upanishad (S) Belongs to the *Atharva Veda;* lays out some of the essential characteristics of a *sannyāsin,* the goal being the realization of *Brahman* through renunciation and meditation; cast in the form of the reply to a question put to the deity *Brahmā* by Āruṇi, a renowned teacher of the *Brāhmaṇas.*

See also: **Upanishads**.

Arval Looking Horse (Sunka Wakan Wicasa) (1954–) A Native American, Cheyenne River Sioux; a Mnikowoju, through his father; the grandson of Lucy Looking Horse, a keeper of the Sacred Pipe. Just before she died, Lucy Looking Horse had a vision, and gave the Pipe to Arval Looking Horse.

Ascension of Isaiah A pseudo-epigraphic work, extant only in a C5th–C7th Ethiopic text, with fragments in Greek, Coptic, Latin and Slavonic; consists of three separate works, edited together with further additions and changes by a Christian hand during the second century. The first section, the *Martyrdom of Isaiah,* is a *midrash* on the story of Isaiah's death at the hands of Manasseh, king of Judah, as told in *2 Kings* (chap. 21), probably written in Hebrew or Aramaic in the early first century CE or earlier, and translated early on into Greek. The second section, the *Testament of Hezekiah,* is a Christian apocalypse, written in Greek late in the first century, in which the spirit of the Antichrist is portrayed as dwelling in the Roman emperor Nero (ruled 54–68 CE), whose persecution of the Christians was perceived as the chaos understood to precede the messianic age. The third section, the *Ascension* (or *Vision*) *of Isaiah,* commonly presumed to have been written in Greek, is in the style of a mystical apocalypse or revelation, describing Isaiah's ascent through the seven levels of heaven until he glimpses the glory of God. The *Vision of Isaiah* has been of particular interest to gnostic groups, and the Slavonic translation of the book was probably made by the medieval Bogomils, and the Latin translation by the Cathars.

Asclepius A Hermetic text, *Asclepius,* written in Greek, but extant in complete form only in Latin; set as a dialogue between Hermēs Trismegistus and his disciple, Asclepius, concerning the nature of *gnosis,* the difference between gnostics and the spiritually ignorant, how human beings create gods in their own likenesses, the spiritual decline of Egypt (apocalyptic, and probably a later interpolation), the ultimate fate of the individual, the hierarchy of creation, and the fate of the soul after death. A Coptic translation of a large section from the middle portion of *Asclepius* is preserved in the Nag Hammadi library, whose text is closer to the surviving Greek fragments than to the somewhat verbose Latin translation.

Asher ben David An early- to mid-thirteenth-century Kabbalist of Provence in southern France; one of the most prominent disciples of his uncle, Isaac the Blind (1160–1235), with whom he lived for many years; sent by Isaac to attend to problems among the Jews of Catalonia (in northeast Spain) caused by the activities of some of Isaac's disciples; refers to his father as both a Kabbalist and his teacher; author of a number of widely read and studied Kabbalistic treatises, collected under the title *Sefer ha-Yiḥud* ('Book of the Union'), some of which are responses to the anti-Kabbalist polemics of his contemporary, Me'ir ben Simeon, although Me'ir ben Simeon is not named.

His works include a long exposition of the tetragrammaton (Y-H-W-H, the four Hebrew consonants comprising the name of God, *Yahweh*); two mystical treatises on oaths and vows, and on cosmogony, the latter including a work of Isaac the Blind; and a commentary on the 13 attributes of God.

These treatises are among the earliest detailed record of Kabbalistic doctrines, and demonstrate how Neo-Platonic ideas had penetrated the early Kabbalistic tradition. In this respect, Asher ben David is to be compared with 'Azri'el of Gerona, another associate of Isaac the Blind.

Ashṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā (S) See **Prajñāpāramitās**.

Assumption of the Virgin An ancient legend found in many forms and languages, including Greek, Latin, Syriac, Coptic, Arabic, Ethiopic and many vernacular medieval versions, comprising miraculous events and sayings concerning the later life and passing of Mary, the mother of Jesus; of uncertain date and language of composition.

Atharva Veda (S) See **Vedas**.

Atharva Veda (S) See **Vedas**.

Ātmabodha (S) *Lit.* knowledge or understanding *(bodha)* of the soul *(ātman)*, self-knowledge; a short text by Shankara (*c.*788–820 CE) on the nature of the *ātman.* The most influential of classical Indian philosophers and a prolific writer, Shankara was the leading exponent of the *Advaita* (non-dualist) school of *Vedānta,* proclaiming the absolute oneness of Reality and the illusory nature of all plurality.

Ātma Upanishad (S) Belongs to the *Atharva Veda;* on the nature of the *Ātman* (Self); part of a discourse in the *Atharva Veda* given by Angiras, regarded as one of the seven mythological *ṛishis (sapta-ṛishi)*, the progenitors of mankind.

See also: **Upanishads**.

'Aṭṭār, Shaykh Nīshāpūrī Farīd al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm (*c.*1142–1220) Also called Farīd al-Dīn Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad; born in Nīshāpūr in northeastern Persia; he, his father or his grandfather may have worked as a herbalist or doctor, since *'aṭṭār* means 'apothecary' or 'perfumer'; regarded as one of the greatest Persian Sufi writers, composing over 45,000 distichs (rhyming couplets) and many prose works; influenced the development of both Persian and other Islamic literature; travelled widely in his youth, visiting Egypt, Syria, Arabia, Central Asia and India, finally settling at his home town of Nīshāpūr; collected many sayings, verses and stories concerning the Sufis, which he brought together in his book, *Tadhkirat al-Awliyā'* ('Memoirs of the Saints'), which covers 97 Sufis, and is regarded as a reliable historical document.

'Aṭṭār is probably best known for his allegorical *Manṭiq al-Ṭayr* ('Conference of the Birds'), in which a company of birds (seekers) are led by the hoopoe (the spiritual Master) on a quest to find the *Sīmurgh* or Phoenix (God). At the end of their journey, they find that they and the *Sīmurgh* are one. Other significant works include two further allegories, *Ilāhī-Nāmah* ('Book of God'), and *Muṣībat-Nāmah* ('Book of Affliction'), and a *Dīvān* (collected poems).

Augustine of Hippo (354–430) Original Latin name Aurelius Augustinus, some details of whose early life are known from his autobiography, *Confessions;* born to a respectable family in Thagaste, Numidia (now Souk Ahras, Algeria), a small Roman community in a river valley, 40 miles from the sea; well-educated, first at Madaura (now Mdaurouch) (365–369); passed a year at home while his father raised the money for his further education, subsequently, aged 16, going to the ancient city of Carthage (now a suburb of Tunis), to study law and rhetoric, enjoying the pleasures of city life (371–374); in 372, became the father of an illegitimate son, Adeodatus; taught briefly at Thagaste (375), before returning to Carthage to teach rhetoric (376–383); wrote a short philosophical book, *Beauty and Proportion,* now lost, dedicated to Hierius, a Roman orator whom he much admired; moved to Rome in 383, where he started his own school, teaching for a short while before receiving an excellent appointment as imperial professor in Milan (384), giving him and his family great hopes of a significant future career (Milan was the usual residence of the emperor at that time, and the effective capital of the western Roman Empire); joined by his mother in Milan in 385; resigned his post within two years, after a conversion experience, returning to Thagaste, where he passed his time attending to his family property, raising Adeodatus, and following his literary interests; aged 36, sold the family property on the death of the teenage Adeodatus; soon after, in 391, was unwillingly appointed presbyter (junior priest) at Hippo, a small seaside town north of Thagaste; appointed Bishop of Hippo around 395, a post he held for the remainder of his life.

Augustine's mother, Monica, was a baptized Christian, and his father, Patricius, a pagan who received baptism not long before his death, when Augustine was in his teens. His parents were decent people, not especially devout, though his mother became more so after her husband's death. Augustine attended pre-baptismal classes as a child, but delayed baptism. In his late teens, on reading Cicero's *Hortensius,* he became interested in philosophy, becoming an ardent Manichaean. However, when he met the Manichaean bishop, Faustus, in Carthage, Augustine was dissatisfied with the answers he received to various questions, and his faith wavered.

When he went to Rome, still associating with the Manichaeans, he discovered and was greatly impressed by the teachings of the mystic, Plotinus

(*c*.205–270). Not long after, in Milan, he met the orthodox Christian Ambrose, and was again impressed, realizing that he had been entertaining incorrect notions concerning Christianity. Here, Plotinus' teaching of God and the *Logos* helped Augustine to understand Christianity. The discovery that Victorinus, the translator of Plotinus into Latin, had ultimately converted to Christianity also had a deep affect on him. Realizing that conversion meant not only giving up his unorthodox views, but also abstinence from sex (which he found difficult), he spent several months in soul-searching and biblical study, before he and Adeodatus sought baptism from Ambrose in the spring of 387. He returned home in the autumn of that year, his mother dying of a fever during the journey.

At the time of Augustine's conversion, North African Christianity was largely Donatist, a movement whose origins were more political than theological, and which was regarded as schismatic by the 'orthodox' Christian emperors of the period. Augustine was therefore in a singular position that turned out to suit his temperament. A contentious person with an intellectual capacity beyond that of most of his North African contemporaries, he held his own by the brilliance of his mind, and by his prodigious literary output. Combining orthodox Christianity with classical Greek and Roman thought, he and his chief ally, Aurelius, Bishop of Carthage, fought Donatism for two decades. Ultimately, in 411, the emperor sent a special envoy to Carthage to settle the matter. A public debate, attended by hundreds of bishops, was held in three sessions on separate days, resulting in a ruling in favour of the official Church, with consequent legal constraints on Donatism. Nevertheless, Donatism survived until the Muslim conquests and the elimination of Christianity in North Africa during the Middle Ages.

Having apparently won the battle against the Donatists, Augustine, now nearly 60, took up cudgels against the doctrines of the lay preacher, Pelagius. Pelagius was an ascetic who – observing the lax moral standards of Christians – taught the essential goodness of human nature, the freedom of the human will to choose between good and evil, that sin is a voluntary act against the divine law, and that human effort is essential in the quest for salvation. Augustine opposed him on the grounds that human beings are completely dependent upon the grace of God, unable to attain virtue by their own efforts. Pelagius was condemned by a council of African bishops in 416 and again in 418, when he was also excommunicated. His teachings lived on, however, in the Italian bishop, Julian of Eclanum, regarded as the main Pelagian intellectual leader. At the time of Augustine's death, he was engaged in writing a long refutation of Julian. In Augustine's latter days, North Africa was invaded by the Germanic Vandals, who laid siege to Hippo. Augustine died a short while before the fall of Hippo, followed soon after by the fall of Carthage.

The surviving works of Augustine number 113 books and treatises, over 500 sermons and more than 200 letters. Of these, the most influential have been *Confessions* and *The City of God*. He was well-known during his own lifetime, but his writings became far more influential after his death. He is regarded as one of the most significant thinkers of the early Church. His integration of classical philosophy and Christian theology created a system which influenced all later Christian thought.

Aurobindo Ghosh (1872–1950) Mystic, philosopher, linguist, writer and Indian nationalist; born in Calcutta; educated first at a Catholic convent school in Darjeeling, then at a school in England, and finally at Cambridge University, acquiring proficiency in Latin, Greek and three modern European languages; returned to India in 1892, taking various administrative and teaching jobs in Baroda and Calcutta before taking up the study of *yoga* and Indian languages, including Sanskrit; from 1902 to 1910, joined the movement to free India from British rule; imprisoned in 1908.

In 1910, Aurobindo fled to the French colony of Pondicherry. There he founded an *āshram*, attracting disciples from all over the world, and devoting himself to his writing and the development of his philosophical system, *Pūrṇādvaita Vedānta* or Integral Nondualism, generally known as *Pūrṇa Yoga* (Integral *Yoga*). *Pūrṇa Yoga* teaches that the absolute God, the world and all souls are one. While God *(Brahman)* sends enlightenment from above, the individual strives by *yoga* to reach Him from below. It is the merging of the two forces that makes a person a mystic, leading to a yogic illumination that transcends reason, intuition and individuality, and culminating in liberation *(moksha)*.

Aurobindo's complex and prolific literary output spanned mystical philosophy, poetry, drama and other works, among them being *Essays on the Gītā* (1928), *Collected Poems and Plays* (1942), *The Synthesis of Yoga* (1948), *The Human Cycle* (1949), *The Ideal of Human Unity* (1949), *Savitri: A Legend and a Symbol* (1950), and *On the Veda* (1956). His best-known work is probably *The Life Divine* (1940).

Authoritative Teaching A highly metaphorical gnostic treatise from the Nag Hammadi codices, teaching the divine origin of the soul, her fall into the material body of "lust and hatred and envy", and her condition in the material world where the Adversary takes every opportunity to lead her astray, until at last she hears the call of God's Messenger, partakes of the heavenly food brought to her by the divine Bridegroom, and returns to God.

Avá-Nembiará A twentieth-century chief of the Avá-Chiripá of eastern Paraguay, known to Miguel A. Bartolomé, and quoted in his "Shamanism Among the Avá-Chiripá".

Avestā (Av) A collective name for all the Zoroastrian sacred writings that are written in the original Avestan, dating largely from the period of Achaemenian rule (559–331 BCE), and differing considerably in content and style. The oldest portion – Zarathushtra's *Gāthās* – must have been composed considerably earlier, even as early as 1500 BCE.

See also: **Zarathushtra and Zoroastrianism** (1.3).

Avot de Rabbi Nathan (He) *Lit.* fathers *(avot)* according to Rabbi Nathan; an extracanonical minor text of the *Talmud,* being a commentary on an early form of the *Mishnah Pirkei Avot* ('Ethics of the Fathers'), which is a collection of ethical, moral and legendary statements of the early rabbis; probably composed between the first and third centuries CE; a valuable source of early rabbinic wisdom.

Ayvu Rapytá (G) *Lit.* origin of the Word; the mythology of the Mbyá Guaraní, written down in Guaraní by the Jesuits; documents the Guaraní belief that the first work of the Creator *(Mybá)* was the *Ñe'eng* or vital Word, the divine part of the soul, which was sent by *Ñe'eng Rú Eté* (True Father of the vital Word) to dwell within man; published in a Spanish translation by León Cádogan in 1959.

'Azri'el of Gerona A leading member of the thirteenth-century Kabbalists of Gerona, in northeast Spain; a disciple of Isaac the Blind, who (judging from an extant letter) opposed 'Azri'el's open dissemination of Kabbalism to a wider audience. Little is known of 'Azri'el's life, however, and since the fourteenth century he has often been confused with an older contemporary, 'Ezra ben Solomon. The differentiation of the writings of 'Azri'el from those of 'Ezra is primarily the work of the twentieth-century Jewish scholar, Isaiah Tishby.

'Azri'el was one of the most profound Kabbalistic thinkers. Clearly familiar with Neo-Platonism, he quotes freely from Neo-Platonic literature. However, the presumed influence of Neo-Platonism on Kabbalism needs to be tempered with the understanding that many mystics and mystically minded thinkers have used similar forms of expression without necessarily having borrowed their ideas from each other. Like many others, 'Azri'el is concerned with the nature of God, the nature of the relationship between God and His creation, and the expression of the divine will, as well as the more practical aspects of the individual's approach to God through meditational practices.

His writings include *Sha'ar ha-Sho'el* ('Gate of the Enquirer'), an exposition of the doctrine of the ten *sefirot* (divine emanations) set in the form of a dialogue, with a commentary by the author; a commentary on the earliest

Kabbalistic text, the *Sefer Yezirah* ('Book of Formation'); a commentary on the Jewish liturgy, comprising instructions on the use of the most important prayers in meditation; and various other commentaries and treatises.

Bābā Jaimal Singh See **Jaimal Singh, Bābā**.

Bābur (1483–1530) Original name, Ẓahīr al-Dīn Muḥammad; first ruler (1526–30) and founder of the Indian Mughul dynasty; conquered Delhi in 1526, during the time of Guru Nānak; a descendant (on his mother's side) of the first great Mongol conqueror, Genghis Khān (*d.*1227), and (on his father's side) of Tīmūr (1336–1405) of Transoxania (now roughly Uzbekistan), Turkic conqueror of lands stretching from India and Russia to the Mediterranean; an adventurer, a brilliant military tactician, a forceful commander, a poet, and chronicler of his exploits.

Turkic in character and language, Bābur's father was ruler of Farghānah, a small principality, north of the Hindu Kush mountain range. The empire founded by Tīmūr was a network of vast territories, governed by warring princes, whose way of life was to rule over as much territory as they could claim, exacting tribute from the farmers and traders. Bābur's first forays met with disaster. While attempting to win back and hold on to his father's capital of Samarkand, in 1501, he lost both Samarkand and his own kingdom of Farghānah. In 1504, however, with the help of his personal followers, he gained control of Kābul. Unable to regain Samarkand despite several further attempts, he finally gave up the idea, and turned his attention eastward to Sind and India.

In Delhi, the Lodī dynasty was weak, torn by internal strife, and ready for overthrow. In four raids on India, between 1519–24, Bābur was unable to gain a strong enough foothold, although in 1522 he had secured Qandahār, strategically placed on the road to Sind. In 1526, however, encouraged by dissidents in the Lodī camp, he was successful in overrunning Delhi and Agra, defeating the 100,000-strong army of Sulṭān Ibrāhīm Lodī with his own small force of 12,000 seasoned veterans, through brilliant military tactics, sound leadership and superior artillery. One of his first projects in Delhi was to build a garden on the banks of the river Jumna, now known as the Rām Bagh.

Although surrounded on all sides by hostile Indian kingdoms, Bābur refused to withdraw with his spoils, unlike Tīmūr who, more than a century before, had razed Delhi to the ground, returning to his capital, Samarkand, within the year, loaded with booty. Despite the searing heat of the Indian summer, and the desire of his troops to return to their homes in Kābul, 800 miles to the north, by May 1529, Bābur had overrun an area stretching from Qandahār to the borders of Bengal in the east, and as far south as the Rajasthan desert, his chief opponents being Rajputs and Afghans. The

territory, however, was far from secure, and although his son, Humāyūn (1508–56), inherited the nascent empire after his father's his death from an unknown illness in 1530, Humāyūn was unable to hold the territory, and was forced out of India in 1540. Encouraged by civil war in North India, Humāyūn returned 15 years later, in 1555, and was able to secure the country, only to lose his life in 1556, falling down some library steps. The task then fell to his son, Akbar the Great (1542–1605), to consolidate the empire, and to lay the foundations of the true Mughul dynasty in India.

Bābur's prose memoirs *(Bābur-Nāmah)* reveal him as a cultured adventurer, an engaging personality, quick-thinking, full of vitality, and a lover of natural beauty.

See also: **Sikhism** (1.11).

Bahā' al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad Naqshbandī, Khwājah (1318–89) A Sufi mystic, born near Bukhārā; known as *Naqshband,* meaning 'embroiderer' or 'painter on cloth', an epithet believed by some to have been given to him because he drew "incomparable pictures of the divine science and of the eternal invention, which are not imperceptible"; founder of the Sufi order, the *Naqshbandīyah,* whose emphasis is on internal and silent recollection or invocation *(ẕikr)* of God, even while occupied with external affairs; his tomb near Bukhārā, known as Qaṣr-i 'Ārifīn (*lit.* court of the gnostics) developed into a thriving rendezvous for Sufis and other Muslims.

Bāhū, Sulṭān (*c.*1630–91) A well-known Sufi poet of the Punjab, sometimes known by the epithet, *Sulṭān al-'Ārifīn* (king of mystics); born in Shorkot, district Jhang (now in Pakistan), of whose life, little is known. Apart from his own poems, the oldest source of information concerning Bāhū is Sulṭān Ḥamīd's, *Manāqib-i Sulṭānī* ('Royal Virtues'). However, the date of the work is unknown, and the contents are not altogether reliable. According to this book, Bāhū's father, Bāyazīd Muḥammad, was a *Sayyid* (descendant of Muḥammad) and a distinguished scholar, whose ancestors had emigrated from Arabia to Khurāsān, in northeastern Iran, and from thence to Kālābāgh, in northeastern India. During the reign of the Mughul Emperor, Shāh Jahān (ruled 1627–66), Bāhū's father moved to Multān, where he served its ruler. The emperor was pleased with his service, and gave him a high position in his court, and some land in the village of Qahrgān, Shorkot, where Bāhū was born.

It is has been presumed that Bāhū was educated largely at home, for he says in one of his Persian verses that although he had little grounding in external knowledge, his soul had been purified by inner knowledge. Nevertheless, it seems unlikely that his scholarly father would have neglected his

education. Indeed, Bāhū is said to have written around 140 books, mostly in Arabic and Persian, and a few in Punjabi. Thirty of these are extant, among them his *Abyāt* (verses) in Punjabi, which are still popular in North India and Pakistan. His Persian works include, *'Ayn al-Faqr* ('Essence of Spiritual Poverty'), *Kalīd al-Tawḥīd* ('Key to Divine Unity'), *Shams al-'Ārifīn* ('Sun among Mystics'), *Kalīd al-Jannat* ('Key to Paradise'), *Kashf al-Asrār* ('Revelation of Secrets'), and *Nūr al-Hudá* ('Light of the *Qur'ān*'). From his poetry, it is clear that he taught the path of the *Kalimah* (Word).

Bāhū praises his mother, Rāstī, in one of his Persian verses for being "gifted with truth". It was she who named him Bāhū, from *bā* (with) and *Hū* (God). It is said that he was grateful to her for giving him such a significant name, and begged her to be his *Murshid* (Master). She declined, since Islam does not permit women to be *Murshids.* Consequently, Bāhū set out in search of a *Murshid.* He spent some time on the banks of the River Rāvī with Ḥaẓrat Ḥabīb Allāh Qādirī, who ultimately directed him to his own *Murshid,* Sayyid 'Abd al-Raḥmān. 'Abd al-Raḥmān was a high ranking officer in the Delhi court of Emperor Aurangzeb, but was also a Sufi of significant spiritual attainment. In his poetry, Bāhū speaks of al-Jīlānī (*c.*1077–1166), the founder of the *Qādirīyah* order, as if he were his Master, but since al-Jīlānī lived more than 500 years before, it is presumed that this was his way of referring to his own Master. It is said that Bāhū met the Emperor Aurangzeb, who held Bāhū in high regard. Bāhū, for his part, preferred to keep his distance from the murderous and bigoted emperor.

Bāhū is generally agreed to have died in 1691, at the age of 63. Depending on whether these were solar or lunar years, this places his date of birth in 1628–29 or 1630–31. He was buried at Qahrgān, near the River Chenab, but his remains were moved a short distance in 1766–67, and again in 1917 to their present location (Gaṛh Mahārājah), when the river changed its course.

Bāli (S. Bālin) A character from the Indian epic, the *Rāmāyaṇa;* the celebrated monkey-king of Kishkindhā, who was slain by Rāma and his kingdom given to his brother, Sugrīva, Rāma's friend and ally.

Basilidēs A second-century Alexandrian gnostic, who was active at the time of the Roman emperors Hadrian (117–138) and Antoninus Pius (138–161); probably a disciple of Menander of Antioch; said by the Christian teacher, Clement of Alexandria (*c.*150–215), to have claimed to have received his teaching from Glaucias, an "interpreter" of the apostle Peter; the author of odes, psalms, and gnostic commentaries on the four gospels, of which only fragments have survived in the writings of others; succeeded by his son, Isodore. Contradictory summaries of Basilidēs' teachings are given by Clement, and the arch-refuters of 'heresy', Irenaeus (*c.*120–202, Bishop of Lyons) and Hippolytus (*c.*170–236, Bishop of Rome). Followers of the

Basilidian school still existed in fourth-century Egypt, and were said to have celebrated the day of Jesus' baptism with an all-night vigil on January 6th or 10th.

Basil the Great (*c.*329–379) Born in Caesarea Mazaca, the capital city of Cappadocia, in eastern Asia Minor, to a distinguished Christian family; son of a lawyer and orator, whose uncle was a bishop, as (later) were two of his brothers (one of whom was Gregory of Nyssa); studied classics at Caesarea, Constantinople and Athens, where he became friends with Gregory of Nazianus (*c.*329–389, later Bishop of Caesarea); returned home (*c.*356) and began a secular career, but influenced by his devout sister, Macrina (later a nun and abbess), rediscovered an earlier interest in the ascetic life; visited the monasteries of Palestine and Egypt in 357; around 358, with a circle of friends, founded a monastic community on the family estate at Annesi, in Pontus (northeast Asia Minor, on the Black Sea); in 360, began a long-term involvement in the defence of 'orthodox' Christianity against Arianism; ordained priest to support Eusebius, the new Bishop of Caesarea; in 370, appointed Bishop of Caesarea and Metropolitan of Cappadocia, though opposed by some of the other bishops in the region; founded various charitable institutions to help the sick, the poor and travellers. Though energetic and confident, Basil's health was poor, and he died at Caesarea, aged 49.

An influential writer, Basil's many works arose from his experience as a monk, pastor and leader of the Church. His *Longer Rules* and *Shorter Rules* and other works on the monastic life reflect his experience at Annesi and his supervision of Cappadocian monasteries. He expresses a preference for communal monastic life over that of the solitary, because it provides an opportunity for the practice of brotherly love. His extant sermons largely address moral and social issues. In *Address to Young Men*, he defends the study of the Greek and Roman classics, in which he himself had been educated, and used in his work. In the *Hexaëmeron* ('Six Days') (a work completed by his more scholarly younger brother, Gregory of Nyssa), he speaks of the natural beauties of creation as reflections of divine glory. His letters, of which over 300 have survived, are concerned with everyday matters, as well as theological and other concerns. His other works deal with ecclesiastical and theological issues, including the anti-Arian stance which formed such a significant part of his ecclesiastical life.

Beatrice Medicine A twentieth-century Lakota Native American; an anthropologist who taught at the University of New Brunswick in 1976; in her work as an academic she supported treaty rights for her people, as well as the rights of women and children. In her teaching and advocacy, she stresses the important role of women in Lakota society, reminding them that they are the "carriers of culture".

Beṇī Jī An Indian mystic or devotee, of whom little is known, three of whose *shabds* are included in the *Ādi Granth* (pp.93, 974).

Bernard of Clairvaux (*c.*1090–1153) Born to a landowning, aristocratic and virtuous family, probably at Fontaine-les-Dijon, near Dijon, in Burgundy, France; turned away from his literary education after his mother's death in 1107, seeking a life of solitude and renunciation.

In 1112, Bernard joined a new monastic community at Cîteaux (the Cistercians), under the abbot, Stephen Harding, persuading his four brothers to join him. The community had been founded in 1908 by Robert Molesmes in an attempt to return to a more fundamental and austere Benedictine rule. In 1115, he was appointed by Stephen Harding to found a small monastery at Clairvaux, on the borders of Burgundy and Champagne. Taking with him his four brothers, two cousins, an uncle, an architect and two experienced monks, they endured great hardship for more than a decade before they became fully functional. By 1119, the Pope had approved nine Cistercian abbeys under the direction of the abbot of Cîteaux. During this time, Bernard was forced by ill health, which dogged him most of his life, to withdraw to a hut near the monastery, where he began his literary work.

Though influential in Church affairs until the end of his life, the period 1130–45 was his most active. He was called upon to act as mediator and advisor to various church and civil councils at a time of papal disarray, which lasted for seven years. He entered into theological debates within the Church, countering especially the intellectual rationalism of Peter Abelard and Gilbert de La Porrée, the latter maintaining that Christ's divine nature was only a human concept. Bernard claimed that love and prayer were better means of knowing God than the exercise of intellect. He was also persuaded by Pope Eugenius III and King Louis VII of France to preach the cause of the disastrous Second Crusade (1147–49) in France and (with interpreters) in Germany.

The tension experienced by Bernard between his outward desire to serve the Church and his inner contemplative leanings is evident in his ample literary output. His best-known works are *The Love of God* and *The Steps of Humility*, which concern contemplative prayer and the imitation of Christ, and his series of sermons on the biblical *Song of Solomon*. His complete works include over 300 sermons and letters.

Bet ha-Midrash (He) *Lit.* the study (midrash) hall *(bet);* a collection of many old *midrashim* (commentaries) made by the nineteenth-century scholar, Adolphe Jellinek, published in a six-volume collection between 1853 and 1877 in Leipzig, Germany. A two-volume edition was published in Jerusalem in 1967.

Bhagavad Gītā (S) *Lit.* sung *(gītā)* by the Lord *(Bhagavat)*; thus, song of the Lord; one of the most popular and widely studied of all Indian scriptures, comprising part of the sixth book of the epic *Mahābhārata;* probably composed much later than the main text, scholarly opinion dating it to between 200 BCE to 200 CE, although some scholars suggest a considerably earlier date, and traditionalists argue that it is not an interpolation at all.

The *Gītā* is written as a battle-field dialogue between Arjuna and Kṛishṇa, an incarnation of the deity *Vishṇu.* It takes place as the great war between the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas is about to begin. The two opposing armies are drawn up facing each other. Seeing friends and relatives on both sides, Arjuna expresses his reluctance to fight in a war in which, however just it may seem, many will be killed. Kṛishṇa replies by explaining that it is Arjuna's duty to fight, dispassionately, without any self-centred concern for the outcome. The forthcoming battle is thus taken as a metaphor for life and, as the dialogue progresses, Kṛishṇa describes the means by which man may come to know God through the blending of the three paths of selfless action *(karma yoga),* knowledge *(jñāna yoga)* and devotion *(bhakti yoga).* Although Kṛishṇa is depicted throughout as a personal deity, and the object of single-minded devotion, the text also describes God as the immanent Spirit, the unmanifested Absolute, and the true nature of the enlightened soul.

The *Bhagavad Gītā* has been the subject of innumerable commentaries by India's many philosophers and mystics, past and present, and has been translated into numerous languages. The appeal of its underlying story, the manner in which it addresses the universal problems of human existence and human spiritual aspirations, and the sublime quality of its transcendent thought have all combined to make it one of the world's most well-loved sacred texts.

Bhāgavata Purāṇa (S) *Lit.* the *Purāṇa* of the Lord *(Bhāgavata);* full name, *Shrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa;* also known as the *Bhāgavata;* a ninth- or tenth-century CE composition, probably from the Tamil region of South India; a celebrated and popular text expressing the emotional intensity of *bhakti* (devotion) for and worship of the deity *Vishṇu;* comprised of 18,000 stanzas in 12 books, the recounting of Krishna's childhood and youth in the tenth book being the best-known and best-loved section; a text sacred to the *Vaishṇava* Hindu school, and greatly loved by Hindu people in general; translated into the many Indian languages; a source of inspiration, providing many themes and scenes for medieval schools of Indian miniature painting.

See also: **Purāṇas**.

Bhāī Gurdās (*c.*1551–1636) An Indian mystic poet and scholar, contemporary of the third, fourth, fifth and sixth *Gurus* in the line of Guru Nānak, acquainted

with them and their contemporaries, including Bhāī Buddha, an aged Sikh who had survived from the time of Guru Nānak; the disciple and nephew of Guru Amardās and the maternal uncle of Guru Arjun; traditionally believed to have been the scribe who collected together the writings that became the *Ādi Granth*, under the supervision of Guru Arjun.

Bhīkhā (*c.*1713–63) An Indian mystic from Uttar Pradesh, his spiritual headquarters being at Bhurkuṛa in District Rāipur; believed to have received initiation from Gulāl Sāhib, of whom he was the successor. His works include *Rām Jahāz* ('The Ship of Rām'), *Rām Rāg* ('The Melody of Rām') and *Rām Sabad* ('The Word of Rām').

Bhīkhan, Bhagat (*c.*1480–1573) An Indian devotee in the tradition of Ravidās and Dhannā, two of whose *shabds* are included in the *Ādi Granth* (p.659); not to be confused with Bhīkhān Shāh, a seventeenth-century scholar and Sufi mystic from Haryana, and a contemporary of Guru Gobind Singh.

Bhikkhā A sixteenth-century Indian writer, whose two *sawayyās* (poetic eulogies) in praise of Guru Amardās are incorporated in the *Ādi Granth* (pp.1395–96); a disciple of Guru Amardās (1479–1574) who lived until the time of Guru Arjun (1563–1606); a *brāhmaṇ* poet of Sulṭānpur Lodī, in the present-day Kapurthala district of the Punjab.

Bīrūnī, Abū al-Rayḥān Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al- (973–1048) Born in Bīrūn, a suburb of Kāth, capital of Khwārazm (now in Turkmenistan); one of the great natural philosophers of the ancient Muslim world; knowledgeable in philosophy, science, astronomy, geography, geology, physics, mathematics, medicine, the world of nature, religion, mysticism, languages and history; a correspondent with the great Persian philosopher and fellow polymath, Ibn Sīnā (980–1037); an accomplished linguist, writing in Arabic, and conversant with Persian, Turkish, Hebrew, Syriac and Sanskrit; made an extensive study of Hindu sacred literature, travelling to India sometime after 1017, where he learned Sanskrit and wrote *Ta'rīkh al-Hind* ('History of India').

Al-Bīrūnī's study of the Hindu concept of the *yugas* and the vast cycles of time through which creation has existed gave him a broad grasp of geological principles far in advance of his time. He suggested that the Indus valley had once been a sea basin. In his works on astronomy, he suggested that the earth was spinning on its own axis, making calculations of latitude and longitude. Among his many books was his translation of Patañjali's *Yoga Sūtras* from Sanskrit into Arabic, and he is considered one of the most reliable sources of information on Eastern religion of his time. His wide-ranging history, *Chronology of Ancient Nations*, remains a major source of

information concerning his period and before. After his visit to India, he settled in Ghazna, in Afghanistan, where he passed the remainder of his life.

Bisṭāmī, Abū Yazīd Ṭayfūr ibn 'Īsá al- (*d.c.*875) Born in Bisṭām, in north-eastern Persia; one of the best-known mystics of Islam; lived as an ascetic for 30 years during which time he is said to have served 113 *Shaykhs;* noted for his miraculous powers and uncompromising outspokenness; credited with saying, "There is no Truth, but I am It" and "Glory to Me! How great is My Majesty! *(Subḥānī! Mā a'ẓama Sha'nī!)*"; regarded as the founder of the Sufi school of intoxication *(maktab-i sukr);* much quoted by later writers. On being asked how he had attained his spiritual height, replied, "I cast off my own self, as a serpent casts off his skin. Then I considered my own self, and found that I was He" (*HSII* p.326).

Black Elk (Hehaka Sapa) (1863–1950) A Lakota (Sioux) holy man of the Oglala tribe, from Pine Ridge Reservation, South Dakota.

See **Some Recent Native Americans** (1.14).

Blavatsky, Helena Petrovna (1831–91) Born in Yekaterinoslav (Dnipropetrovsk), Ukraine, then part of the Russian Empire; born H.P. Hahn, married Nikifor V. Blavatsky, a Russian army officer and provincial vice-governor, when she was 17, but separated after a few months; became interested in occultism and the spiritual path, travelling widely in Europe, Asia and the USA; also claims to have spent some years in India and Tibet with Indian *gurus;* met and became a close companion of the lawyer and newspaperman, Henry Steel Olcott, on a visit to New York in 1873; founder member, along with Olcott and several other prominent individuals, of the Theosophical Society, in 1875.

Blavatsky's first major work, *Isis Unveiled,* was published in 1877, in which she advocates mystical experience over science and religion as the way to true spiritual insight and knowledge. Though the book attracted some attention, the society's membership in the USA dwindled. In 1879, Blavatsky and Olcott went to India, where the Society rapidly gained a large following. Three years later, they established the headquarters of the Society at Adyar, near Madras, and published *The Theosophist,* edited by Blavatsky from 1879 to 1888.

Blavatsky asserted that she possessed psychic powers, which she demonstrated in public, but while travelling to London and Paris in 1884, she was accused of fraud by the Indian press, an accusation supported in 1885 by the London Society for Psychical Research. Although meeting with an enthusiastic reception on her return to India, she left soon after, in failing health. Thereafter, she lived quietly in Germany, Belgium and finally London, work-

ing on *The Voice of Silence* (1889, her small, meditative classic), *The Secret Doctrine* (1888, an overview of theosophy), and *Key to Theosophy* (1889).

Book of Chuāng Tzu (Zhuāng Zi) Also called, simply, the *Chuāng Tzu;* written by Chuāng Tzu; one of the best-known works in Chinese literature, regarded as an essential source book for the study of classical Taoism.

See also: **Chuāng Tzu**, **Taoism** (1.13).

Book of Legends (He. *Sefer ha-Aggadah*) A distillation of legends from the *Talmud* and *Midrash,* edited by Yehoshua Hana Ravnitzky and the famous Hebrew poet, Hayim Nahmun Bialik; first published in 1911, translated into English by W.G. Braude in 1992.

Book of Lièh Tzu (Liè Żi) The book attributed to the sage, Lièh Tzu, and named after him, in the manner of many other such treatises of those times; called by some schools *Ch'ūng-Hsū Chēn-Chīng* ('True Classic of the Expansive Void'); regarded as one of the most important texts of classical Taoism after the *Tào Té Chīng* and the *Book of Chuāng Tzu;* considered more easily understood as an introduction to the mysterious and intangible philosophy of Taoism, making use of parables; contains many passages common to other Taoist classics, some sections of the *Chuāng Tzu,* for instance (*e.g.* nearly half of section two), appearing throughout the book; probably did not reach its present form until the third or fourth centuries CE.

Book of Life (He. *Sefer ha-Ḥayyim*) An anonymous work written at the turn of the thirteenth century by a member of the German *Ḥasidei Ashkenaz* movement; begins by considering the essence of God, His holy names and His various powers, and concludes by addressing man's good and evil tendencies, and ways to surmount evil; a significant work in the history of Jewish mysticism because some of the ideas resemble those of the Kabbalah.

Book of Mirdad, The A book written in English by the Lebanese author, Mikhail Naimy, first published in New York 1948, in which legend, mysticism, philosophy and poetry are blended into a fictional legend about a monastery called the Ark and a mysterious visitor and teacher, Mirdad. Through its archaic language, its fragmentary structure and its folkloric qualities, Naimy gave *The Book of Mirdad* such a mythic flavour that many readers have taken various hints in the book to mean that it is based on a text he had discovered. It is not. Naimy died in the 1980s, but his family are clear that the book is entirely his own work. Naimy was a close friend of Kahlil Gibran, and was renowned in the Lebanon as foremost among Arabic poets. He was raised as an Orthodox Antiochian Christian.

Book of Revelation Original Greek name, the *Apocalypse of John;* the last book of the New Testament, and the most difficult to follow; often called *Revelations;* very different in style and doctrine from John's gospel; belongs to a genre of contemporary Jewish, Middle Eastern and Hellenistic apocalypses; an apocalyptic text of hope and victory, addressing the Church in time of persecution, as it awaits the Second Coming and the end of the world; probably compiled during the persecutions of Nero (in 64) and/or Domitian (around *c.*95); stated in its opening verses to be a revelation given by God to Christ ("to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass"), who conveys it through an angel to "his servant John", in exile on the island of Patmos. John is to write it all down, and pass it on. The work is addressed to the "seven churches which are in Asia (*i.e.* Asia Minor)". The text begins as a series of seven letters to the seven churches, interspersed with visions. After that, it is occupied largely with visions of various kinds, whose content is primarily symbolic in significance.

The repetitions, disjointed sequence of visions, and passages clearly out of context have resulted in numerous suggestions concerning the origins of the book. Most scholarly analyses agree that it is a multi-source compilation. The letters to the seven churches clearly constitute one source, and the revelational material may have come from two or more separate 'revelations'. One of these may have been a Jewish messianic apocalypse, adapted to a Christian context. There are also a series of "he who overcometh" verses scattered throughout the book that read more coherently when arranged as a single independent poetic work (2:7, 11, 17; 3:5, 12, 20–21; 21:7). Some scholars have suggested that the book was never completed, the impossible task of amalgamating the diverse material finally defeating the compiler-editor. Others have thought that maybe the pages of the original manuscript were accidentally shuffled, and entire sections displaced.

Although accepted by some members of the Western churches from the late-second century onwards as the work of the apostle John, *Revelations* had many detractors. The third-century Roman priest, Caius, attributed the book to the 'heretic', Cerinthus, and its authenticity was doubted by the Eastern churches until the fifth century.

See also: **reincarnation and transmigration (in Christianity): Other New Testament Indications** (6.3), **Revelations** (1.5).

Book of the Glory (He. *Sefer ha-Kavod*) A book composed by Judah ben Samuel he-Ḥasid (*c.*1150–1217), mystic and foremost teacher of the *Ḥasidei Ashkenaz* movement; probably ben Samuel's most important work, though extant only as quotations in later works; predates the Kabbalistic use of the term *Kavod* (Glory).

Book of the Life of Adam and Eve An apocryphal *aggadah* (narrative legend) concerning the sin of Adam and Eve and the death of Adam; generally believed to have been written in Palestine between 100 BCE and 200 CE; exists in Greek, Latin and Slavonic versions.

Book of Thomas the Contender A gnostic text from the Nag Hammadi library, taking the form of answers to questions put to Jesus by his twin brother, Judas Thomas, some time after the death of Jesus, and as recorded by Mathaias (possibly the apostle Matthew); related in philosophical content to the *Acts of Thomas* and the *Gospel of Thomas*. 'Contender' is a translation of the Greek, *athletēs*, meaning 'one who struggles' against human passions. The themes of the text include true knowledge of the self, the fire of human passions, the wise and the spiritually ignorant, and bondage to error and to the material body. The presence of an editorial seam between the series of questions and answers and a monologue by the Saviour suggests that the work is probably a combination of two or more earlier sources.

Brahma Bindu Upanishad (S) *Lit. Upanishad* of the drop *(bindu)* of *Brahman (Brahm);* also called the *Amṛita Bindu Upanishad.*

See **Amṛita Bindu Upanishad**.

Brāhmaṇas (S) Priestly texts, written as commentaries on the hymns of the *Vedas* to which they are attached, explaining the hidden meaning of the various sacrificial rituals and the symbolic significance of the ceremonial actions of the priest *(brāhmaṇ)*, often illustrated and justified by appeal to mythology; the oldest sources concerning the history of Vedic rituals; probably written between 900 BCE and 700 BCE, at a time when the Vedic hymns were being gathered into collections *(saṃhitās)*. *Brāhmaṇa* means 'relating' to or 'given by a *brāhmaṇ*', but it is uncertain whether it refers to the words of a *brāhmaṇ* or to a discourse on the meaning of the *Vedas*.

Each of the four *Vedas* has its own associated collection of *Brāhmaṇas*, dealing with such rites as morning and evening sacrifices, 12-day rites, lunar rites, the sacrificial fire, *soma* ceremonies, the inauguration of kings, atonement for mistakes and bad omens happening during sacrifices, and so on. Such sacrifices were understood as the means by which man could relate to and control both human affairs and the cosmic processes surrounding him. Significance was given to similarities or homologues built into the rituals as a mirror of both human affairs and cosmic processes. Through this symbolic representation, man felt able to participate in the otherwise uncontrollable events that dominate his existence.

Brahma Saṃhitā (S) A collection *(saṃhitā)* of prayers; the name of a number of works.

Brahma Sūtras (S) Sometimes called the *Vedānta Sutras;* a work comprising brief interpretations of the doctrines of the *Upanishads,* attributed to Bādarāyaṇa, traditionally identified with the sage Vyāsa; a fundamental text of the *Vedānta* school of Indian philosophy. Shankara's commentary on the *Brahma Sūtras* is one of Hinduism's most profound expositions of the one, unchanging Reality and the illusory nature of duality. Likewise, Rāmānuja's commentary on the *Brahma Sūtras* presents the intellectual rationale for devotional practice.

See also: **Rāmānuja**, **Shankara**.

Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad (S) *Lit.* great *(bṛihat)* forest *(āraṇyaka) Upanishad;* belonging to the *Yajur Veda;* one of the older and longer *Upanishads,* considered one of the most important by the *Vedānta* school of Indian philosophy; a large and complex work, sometimes allegorical, partly set as a dialogue between the sage Yājñavalkya and various scholars, dealing with ritualistic though meditative worship, as well as *Brahman,* the *ātman* (self), the created worlds, leaving the body, and various aspects of the body, such as the senses, *prāṇa* (subtle life energy), and so on; teaches the absolute identity of the *ātman* and *Brahman,* as in the dictum, "*Ayam ātmā Brahma* (This self is *Brahman*)" (2:5.19); also contains the first clear enunciation of the doctrines of rebirth and liberation in Indian literature; the subject of a commentary by the Indian philosopher, Shankara.

See also: **Upanishads**.

Bruce Codex A papyrus codex containing Arabic, Ethiopic and Coptic manuscripts, said to have been bought in an unbound loose-leaf form by the Scottish traveller, James Bruce, at Medinet Habu in Upper Egypt, around 1769; acquired in 1848 by the Bodleian Library in Oxford, and subsequently bound in 1886, without little regard to order or sequence, some leaves being upside-down; first numbered, transcribed and translated (into German) by Carl Schmidt in 1892.

The *Bruce Codex* contains two independent Coptic manuscripts, in different handwriting and on different qualities of papyrus. The first manuscript contains two books, the first of which is named, *The Book of the Great Logos Corresponding to the Mysteries.* However, the content of both these books suggests that they are the *First* and *Second Books of Jeu,* referred to in another Coptic text, the *Pistis Sophia.* Both books are set as the answers to questions put to Jesus by his disciples. The first book concerns salvation

from the *archon* (ruler) of this world through the *Logos*, the essential ignorance inherent in bodily existence, and the emanation of the "treasuries of the Light" by *Jeu*, the true God. In the second, Jesus speaks of the mysteries of baptism into the "treasury of the Light", the erasing of sins, and the ascent of the soul back to the *Treasury of the Light*.

The second manuscript is generally known as the *Untitled Text*, since its beginning and end are both missing, including the original title. It speaks of the "First Father of the All" as the self-originated place and the First Sound or divine Voice by which everything is created, going on to describe the emanation of man and all the worlds.

The earliest date of composition of these two texts is probably the second century CE, although they may have been written as late as the third century.

Bū 'Alī Qalandar (*c.*1202–1324) Ḥażrat Shaykh Sharaf al-Dīn Bū 'Alī Shāh Qalandar; also called Shāh Sharaf; lived in Pānipāt in present-day Haryana; an eminent Islamic scholar at the king's court in Delhi, as well as a poet and mystic; regarded as the founder of the *Qalandarīyah* order of Sufis. His extensive writings include his *Maktūbāt* (letters), a *Dīvān* (collected poems) and a *Maśnavī* (poem in rhymed couplets).

Buddha (*c.*560–480 BCE) *Lit.* enlightened one; the honorific title given to Prince Siddhārtha Gautama, Gautama being his family name; also called Gautama Buddha; of the Shākya clan, son of Shuddhodana (king of Kapilavastu) and Māyā (princess of Devadaha); born in Lumbinī, Kapilavastu, on the border of Nepal; taught in the area around Vārāṇasī in India, teaching the doctrine of the four 'noble truths', and the 'chain of causation' that leads to suffering. The religion which formed around his teachings has become known as Buddhism. At one stage, the Buddha was deified by the Hindus and regarded as an incarnation of the deity *Vishṇu*.

See also: **Buddhism** (1.12).

Buddhaghosha A fifth-century (CE) Indian Buddhist scholar, who travelled to Anurādhāpura, the ancient capital of Sri Lanka, where he discovered many Sinhalese Buddhist texts, which he translated into Pali. His text, *Visuddhimagga* ('Path of Purity') summarizes the *Tripiṭaka* (*lit.* three baskets, the Pali canon), setting out the doctrines of *Hīnayāna* Buddhism.

Bukhārī, Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl al- (810–870) Born in Bukhārā in Central Asia (now in Uzbekistan); a Muslim scholar, well known as one of the major collectors of *ḥadīth* – sayings and stories of Muḥammad handed down by oral tradition. In search of *ḥadīth*, al-Bukhārī travelled

widely from Cairo to Merv (in Central Asia), and the fruits of his labour are collected in the *Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* ('Genuine Traditions of al-Bukhārī'), comprising 97 short 'books', arranged by subject, and accepted by most *Sunnīs* (the major branch of Islam) as the most important text after the *Qur'ān*. His work is one of the six accepted collections of *ḥadīth*.

Al-Bukhārī was diligent. From the 600,000 *ḥadīth* he collected, he selected only 7,275 as authentic, and he begins his work with short biographies of those who formed the links in the chain of oral transmission. In the latter years of his life, he became involved in a theological dispute, and left Nīshāpūr for Bukhārā. But on refusing to teach the governor of Bukhārā and his children, he was sent into exile in Khartank, near Samarkand, where he died.

See also: **The Islamic Way of Life** (1.10).

Bulleh Shāh (1680–1758) Real name, 'Abd Allāh Shāh; a Sufi mystic and Punjabi poet, born into a high-class Muslim family (a *Sayyid*, descendants of Muḥammad); son of a devout Muslim scholar of Arabic and Persian, Shāh Muḥammad Dervīsh; probably born at Uch Gīlāniyān in the district of Bahāwalpūr (now in Pakistan); moved at an early age to Pandoke, when his father was appointed preacher at the village mosque and teacher to the village children; sent to Qaṣūr, near Lahore, 14 miles northwest of Pandoke, for his higher education, where he is said to have distinguished himself as a scholar, with a knowledge of Arabic and Persian; incurred the severe disapproval of his family when he became a disciple of Shāh 'Ināyat Qādirī (*d.*1728) of Lahore, of the humble *Arā'īn* caste of gardeners and agriculturalists, and a member of the *Qādirīyah* order of Sufis.

A number of legends, miraculous and otherwise, are associated with Bulleh Shāh. According to a traditional story, Bulleh Shāh asked his Master, Shāh 'Ināyat, to attend a family wedding. Knowing that his disciple still retained some ego concerning his high caste, and wishing to purify him, Shāh 'Ināyat did not attend in person, but sent a low caste disciple as his representative. This disciple was poorly received by the family, including Bulleh Shāh. When the disciple returned, Shāh 'Ināyat was told what had happened, and the next time Bulleh Shāh came to see his Master, Shāh 'Ināyat refused to see him. Bulleh Shāh realized his mistake, and begged forgiveness, but it made no difference. For some years, Bulleh Shāh was not permitted to see his Master. Perhaps it is from this time of love and yearning that many of his poems have sprung. Ultimately, he became so desperate that he joined a troupe of dancing girls, and dressed up as a woman, so that he could perform at a festival that he knew his Master would attend. Seeing his persistence, and knowing that the separation had had the desired effect, Shāh 'Ināyat once again permitted Bulleh Shāh to visit him.

Many of Bulleh Shāh's *kāfīs* contain a pantheistic strain. The Lord, he says, is present in every part of His creation, yet is only seen by the rare few who have the eyes to see Him. His songs of mystical love and longing are still popular in India and Pakistan. An *urs,* a ceremony celebrating the union of the soul of a deceased Saint with the Supreme Being, is performed every year at the tomb of Bulleh Shāh's father in Pandoke Bhattiyān, where Bulleh Shāh's *kāfīs* are sung, a tribute to both father and son.

canonical literature A class of scripture ratified by a high-level council of religious (*e.g.* Christian or Jewish) authorities to express accurately the beliefs of their religion.

See also: **apocryphal literature**.

Chaldaean Breviary A book of psalms, hymns, prayers, etc., used by the Chaldaean Christians, the descendants of the ancient Nestorian Church, in communion with the see of Rome since 1830, after four centuries of negotiations; written in Syriac, as their traditional liturgical language.

Charaṇdās (1703–82) A mystic poet, born at Ḍehrā in Mewāt in Rajasthan, later moving to Delhi, where he spent the latter part of his life holding spiritual discourses. His writings are notable for their references to yogic philosophy. Among his disciples were the devotees, Sahajobāī and Dayābāī.

Charan Singh Mahārāj (1916–90) An Indian Saint *(Sant);* born at Mogā in the Punjab; fifth in the line of Radha Soami Masters at Beas in the Punjab, from December 12th 1951 to June 1st 1990; the grandson and disciple of Mahārāj Sāwan Singh; practised law until succeeding to the mastership of Sardār Bahādur Mahārāj Jagat Singh; travelled widely, carrying the message of *Sant Mat* (Path of the Saints) around the world, initiating over a million and a quarter souls in India and overseas. His discourses, letters to disciples and answers to questions have formed the basis of a number of books in English, Punjabi and other languages. His many activities included establishing annual eye camps at the Beas centre, largely for cataract operations, and building a charitable hospital at Beas. Immediately prior to his death, he appointed Bābā Gurinder Singh as his successor.

Charles Alexander Eastman (Ohiyesa) (1858–1939) A mixed-blood Sioux whose maternal grandmother, a daughter of Chief Cloudman of the Mdewankton Sioux, was married to a well-known Western artist, Captain Seth Eastman. Their daughter, Mary Nancy Eastman, married Chief Many Lightnings, a Wahpeton Sioux. Ohiyesa was their fifth child. Raised in Canada, Eastman went on to become one of the best-known educated Indians

of his time, receiving a science degree from Dartmouth in 1887 and a medical degree from Boston University three years later.

Chhāndogya Upanishad (S) Belonging to the *Sāma Veda, Chhāndogya* implying the 'doctrine of the *Chhandogas*', a *Chhandoga* being a singer of the verses of the *Sāma Saṃhitā;* one of the older and longer *Upanishads,* considered very important by the *Vedānta* school of Indian philosophy; an extensive and complex work, concerning ritualistic worship with an emphasis on meditation, together with various fundamental aspects of *Vedānta,* including the nature of the *ātman* (self) and *Brahman;* contains the Vedic dictum, "*Tat tvam asi* (Thou art that)", which occurs at various places throughout the *Upanishad* (*e.g.* 6:8.7).

See also: **Upanishads**.

Christopher Marlowe (1564–93) An Elizabethan playwright and poet; Shakespeare's most celebrated predecessor; second child and eldest son of a Canterbury shoemaker; educated at King's School, Canterbury, and Cambridge University; obtained his BA in 1584; was granted his MA in 1587, despite the university's hesitation arising from his frequent absences from Cambridge, only when the Privy Council send a letter indicating that he had been employed "in matters touching the benefit of his country" – *i.e.* in Elizabeth I's secret service; noted for establishing the use of blank verse in drama; his plays – written in a brief career of little more than six years – include *Tamburlaine the Great, Edward II* and *Dr Faustus* (based on a German legend in which the doctor sells his soul to the devil in exchange for knowledge and power); gained a reputation in his own time as an atheist, homosexual and libertine; stabbed to death by a companion in a tavern brawl in Deptford, allegedly over payment of the bill.

Chronicles (He. *Divrei ha-Yamim, lit.* events of the times) The last book of the canonical Hebrew Bible; written in the fourth century BCE; relates the history of Israel from the time of David until the destruction of the kingdom of Judah during the reign of Zedekiah (C6th BCE).

Chuāng Tzu (Zhuāng Zi) (*c.*369–286 BCE) Also known as Chuāng Chōu (Zhuāng Zhōu); lived and worked as a minor administrator in the Chinese state of Sùng; one of the foremost admirers of Lǎo Tzu, living three centuries later, and one of the most revered sages of classical Taoism; author of the work known as the *Book of Chuāng Tzu,* regarded as one of the primary source books of classical Taoism.

See **Taoism** (1.14).

Cicero, Marcus Tullius (106–43 BCE) Formerly known in English as Tully; a Roman statesman, orator, lawyer, scholar and writer whose voluminous writings are regarded as the epitome of Latin prose; son of a wealthy family of Arpinium; educated in Rome and Greece; entered military service in 89 BCE under Pompeius Strabo (the father of Pompey); made his first public appearance as a lawyer in 81 BCE, where his skills soon came to be respected; began his public career in 75 BCE, as quaestor (magistrate in financial administration) in western Sicily.

Cicero tried in vain to uphold republican principles throughout the civil wars and political power struggles that dominated his life. As praetor (senior magistrate) in 66 BCE, he championed the appointment of Pompey in the successful war against Mithradatēs, king of Pontus, a region in northeast Asia Minor. In 63 BCE, Cicero was elected consul (an annual appointment), his most difficult challenge being to persuade the Senate of the danger of Catiline and his plans of sedition. Cicero prevailed, despite an assassination attempt; Catiline and his fellow conspirators were captured and executed; and Cicero was hailed as the "father of his country" and the friend of all classes of society. His later political career was one of changing fortunes while Pompey, Caesar, Octavian, Mark Antony and others struggled for power. From September 44 to April 43, Cicero delivered a series of orations to the Senate trying to persuade them to declare war on Mark Antony. Although initially defeated in April 43, Mark Antony regained power, and in October 43, the triumvirate of Mark Antony, Octavian and Lepidus was formed. Cicero was sought for execution, and was captured and killed in December 43.

Cicero was an astonishingly prolific writer. His correspondence with friends and colleagues is in itself voluminous (over 800 of his letters have survived). Many of his speeches and written works are also extant. He was particularly renowned as a political orator and an expert defence lawyer. Not averse to self-aggrandizement, in *Brutus,* Cicero attributes his prowess as an orator and his ability to sway a jury even in the face of adverse evidence to a foundation in philosophy; a skilful blend of literary and historical knowledge; expertise in legal matters; argumentative skill; the capacity to arouse the emotions of anger, pity and so forth; his wit and humour; and his ability to see and to present the essentials of a case clearly.

Cicero only began to write seriously on philosophy around 54 BCE, but most of his philosophical writings were written during the years 45–44, shortly before his death. Like many of the ancient thinkers, he wrote on a wide range of subjects, taking the writings of the Academics, Epicureans, Peripatetics and Stoics as his sources, and Aristotle and the scholar, Heracleides Ponticus, as his models. With the exception of his last book, *De officiis* ('Concerning Duties'), he claims no originality. Writing at a time when Latin was replacing Greek as the *lingua franca,* his purpose was to

transmit the wealth of Greek thought to the Roman world. In a letter to Atticus, he writes of his philosophical works, "They are transcripts; I simply supply words, and I've plenty of those" (in "Cicero", *EB*).

Clementine Homilies, Clementine Recognitions Part of the pseudo-Clementine literature, a diverse body of work incorrectly attributed to the late-first-century Clement, Bishop of Rome, including letters, a sermon, two treatises on virginity, the *Apostolic Constitutions* (early Christian ecclesiastical law), the *Clementine Homilies* (preserved in the Greek original), and a very similar work, the *Clementine Recognitions* (extant in Latin and Syriac translations made around 400 CE). The *Homilies* and *Recognitions* are based on an earlier work, the *Travels of Peter,* mentioned by the ecclesiastical historian, Eusebius (*c.*265–340) and the Greek theologian, Origen (*c.*185–254). These entertaining books begin with Clement's explanation of how he came to be in the company of Peter, going on to relate the deeds, sayings and teachings of the apostle, from an early Judaeo-Christian point of view, including Peter's encounter with the early gnostic, Simon Magus. The medieval story of Faust was based upon this portrayal of Simon Magus.

See also: **Apocryphal Sources** (1.5).

Clement of Alexandria (*c.*150–215) Latin name, Titus Flavius Clemens; born in either Athens or Alexandria to a pagan family; educated in classical philosophy in various Italian and eastern Mediterranean centres; converted to Christianity, possibly by his last teacher, Pantaenus (said to have previously been a Stoic philosopher); succeeded Pantaenus, around 180, as head of the latter's school in Alexandria for new Christian converts, some of whom later became Church leaders; was the effective leader for the next two decades of intellectual Christians in Alexandria; taught that Greek philosophy and the law of Moses, like river tributaries, were both steps leading to the Truth, personified in the *Logos* (Word), thus opening a way towards the acceptance of Christianity for those educated in the Greek tradition (*i.e.* pagans); adopted an anti-gnostic stance; was regarded with suspicion by non-intellectual Christians (with whom he engaged in debate when given the opportunity), who believed in salvation through faith alone; compelled to retire, probably around 202, when persecution under the Roman emperor, Severus (ruled 193–211) forced him to leave Alexandria, being succeeded as head of the school by Origen (*c.*185–254), presumably when the persecutions had ceased. Clement's activities and whereabouts in his latter years are obscure, although he seems to have lived in Jerusalem, Antioch and possibly other places. The place and circumstances of his death are unknown.

Among his writings, his three most significant works are the *Protreptikos* ('Exhortation to the Heathen'), an attempt to win converts from the pagan

world by appealing to their own philosophy; the *Paidagogos* ('Instructor'), a manual of belief and behaviour for Christian converts; and the *Stromateis* ('Miscellanies'), describing gnostic and pagan philosophies and beliefs, with a great many quotations, in the attempt to draw from them the threads of the true Christian *gnosis* (higher knowledge), as he understood it. These three books are the largest works surviving from this early period of Christianity. His other extant works include various moral and ethical treatises, a collection of sayings of the gnostic Theodotus *(Excerpta ex Theodoto)*, with a commentary by Clement, and fragments of a bible commentary,

Colossians, Ephesians New Testament texts. *Colossians* is ostensibly a letter from Paul to the Christian community at Colossae (in southwest Phrygia, now in Turkey). Paul has never met the Colossians, the group having been founded by a certain Epaphras (1:7). In the most reliable manuscripts of *Ephesians*, the initial salutation contains no reference to the saints, "who are in Ephesus", and it is presumed that this letter was written for general circulation, the place name being added by a later hand. Both letters are written from prison in Ephesus.

The authenticity of these two letters has been questioned by scholars on the grounds that they contain an elaboration of Paul's normal philosophy, and are written in a markedly different literary style from Paul's other letters. Both *Colossians* and *Ephesians* follow the same pattern, saying much the same thing in slightly different words. The elaboration of Paul's teaching concerns the existence of cosmic powers – "thrones", "dominions", "principalities" and "powers" (*Colossians* 1:16, *KJV*). These are said to be a part of the universe created by the First-born Son, Christ, the head of all such powers. It is through this Christ, says the writer, that Christians have been spiritually 'circumcised' by being released from bondage to the body. Through baptism, they have also been raised (resurrected) from the death of sinfulness, and have been forgiven. Christ has overridden "the law" (2:14, *JB*), and cancelled all the debts of sin by his death on the cross. He has thus freed his followers from these cosmic powers.

The writer is addressing the belief and practice of those who offer obeisance to such powers, and perform various rituals to appease them. He tells the Christians that they should pay no attention to such things, for Christ is above them all. The doctrine of spiritual resurrection that is briefly outlined is quite different from Paul's usual teaching of resurrection at the time of the Second Coming. In fact, the teaching concerning cosmic powers has obvious gnostic overtones.

While counselling against asceticism, the writer goes on to advise the inward destruction of all weaknesses pertaining to earthly life: fornication, evil desires, greed, anger, spite, abusive language, and so on. He exhorts his readers to kindness, humility, brotherly love and mutual support.

Ephesians is the source of the well-known saying, "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath" (4:26, *KJV*). He encourages family harmony, with specific instructions to wives, husbands, children, slaves and masters, advising them all to persevere in their prayers.

He ends with some personal news of various individuals and a final greeting, which raises further textual problems. In his short letter, *Philemon*, also written from prison, Paul explains that he is returning Onesimus (a runaway slave) to Philemon as a loving brother in Christ, requesting Philemon to be kind to his erstwhile slave. In *Colossians*, Paul says that he is sending Tychicus with personal news along with Onesimus. In *Ephesians*, he says that he is sending Tychicus; Onesimus is not mentioned. Thus, *Philemon* is echoed by *Colossians*, and *Colossians* is echoed by *Ephesians*. A number of scholars have therefore supposed that *Colossians* is a substantial reworking of *Philemon*. The essentially personal letter to Philemon has had all the other material added. In this scenario, *Colossians* is dated to the early second century, and *Ephesians* is a later reworking of *Colossians* with some small doctrinal differences.

See also: **Paul** (1.5).

Concept of Our Great Power Possibly better rendered as 'Knowledge of Our Great Power'; a gnostic treatise from the Nag Hammadi library, of uncertain date and provenance; a somewhat confused and rambling text concerning the "great Power" "who is exalted above all powers" (also identified with the *Logos*) that gives salvation; depicts an apocalyptic end of the world when all those souls who know the great Power will be taken back to the "immeasurable Light".

Confucius (551–479 BCE) The latinized form of K'ŭng Fū Tzu, meaning the philosopher or master K'ŭng, Tzu being an appendage customarily reserved for venerable persons; a native of the state of Lŭ in what is now the Shāntūng province of China; said to be the first Chinese philosopher, as well as the founder of Chinese literature. His philosophy is found in the *Analects*, a collection of his sayings compiled by his disciples. The depth of his personality and the morality of his teachings had a profound effect on the dynasties that guided China for many centuries afterwards.

Corpus Hermeticum A body of Greek and Latin texts ascribed to Hermēs Trismegistus and his disciples.

See **Hermetic Literature** (1.9).

Cyril of Alexandria (*c.*375–444) A Christian theologian; appointed Bishop of Alexandria in 412, a post he held until his death, as successor to his uncle; known for his contentious part in the fifth-century doctrinal disputes, particularly his campaign against Nestorius (*d.*451), Patriarch of Constantinople. Nestorius taught that the human and divine natures of Jesus were distinct, and Jesus had sometimes been one and sometimes the other. Established doctrine was that the two natures were merged into one person. There was also a political side to the dispute. Nestorius had been appointed by the eastern Roman emperor, Theodosius II (ruled 408–450), and the Alexandrians feared a swing of power and doctrinal emphasis towards Constantinople.

In 431, with the permission of the Pope, Cyril convened a general council at Ephesus. Starting proceedings before the arrival of certain eastern bishops, the council condemned Nestorius. When the eastern bishops arrived, they understandably reconvened the council, and condemned Cyril. The Pope's acceptance of Cyril's decision was eventually secured, Nestorius branded a heretic, and banished. But the dispute dragged on, and a semblance of peace was only restored when Cyril accepted a compromise with Antioch emphasizing the distinctness of the two natures, but within the one person of Christ.

Cyril was a zealous and politically minded defender of the 'orthodox'. He closed the churches of the Novatians, who believed that the Church could not absolve those who had reverted to idolatry in times of persecution. He was also party to the expulsion of the Jews from Alexandria, after civil disturbance between Christians and Jews. The result was rioting, which Cyril did nothing to prevent, and which was only brought under control by the intervention of the civil authorities.

Cyril's writings include commentaries on the *Pentateuch;* on *Isaiah;* and on the gospels of Luke and John; together with *Against Julianus,* a response to *Against the Galileans,* of the Emperor Julian (ruled 361–363). Julian had been raised as a Christian, but announced his reversion to paganism on becoming emperor.

See also: **Nestorians**.

Dabistān-i Maźāhib *Lit.* school of manners; a contemporary chronicle of religions in India, written in Persian by the Muslim, Muḥsin Fānī, during the mid-seventeenth century, probably completed in 1653; provides information concerning the beliefs of different creeds such as the Hindus, Buddhists, Parsees, Jews, Christians, Muslims, Sufis and philosophers; also includes details of the lives of some of the Sufis and Muslim holy men of the Mughul India.

Muḥsin Fānī seems to have had a particular interest in Sufism and mysticism, meeting many holy men, including the sixth and seventh Sikh *Gurus,* as well as the mystic, Sarmad, whom he met in 1647. A section of his book is devoted to the *Nānakpanthīs* – the early Sikhs. He says that he was initiated by a *sannyāsin* of Bārāmūlā. The *Dabistān* is not considered altogether reliable, however. One of the early British historians of the Sikhs, J.D. Cunningham, dismisses him as "a gossiping and somewhat credulous person", which comment may also reflect Cunningham's bias.

See also: **Sikhism** (1.11).

Dādū (*c.*1544–1603) An Indian Saint *(Sant)* and poet; born in Ahmedabad, in the state of Gujarat, into a family of cotton carders, a trade by which he earned his living; initiated by Shrī Vṛiddhānanda at the age of 11; following the instructions of his Master, began teaching the practice of the mystic Name in Jaipur and other parts of Rajasthan, when he was 19, settling in Narānā, near Jaipur; accepted both Muslims and Hindus as disciples, but insisted on both abstention from alcohol and vegetarianism; the author of more than 5,000 verses, hymns and aphorisms in Hindi, on spiritual and philosophical themes, and characterized by their forthright language, often challenging the orthodox views of the day; died at Narānā around 1603. Present-day followers of Dādū are known as *Dādūpanthīs.*

It is said that in 1584 the Mughul emperor, Akbar the Great – who brought scholars, theologians and holy men of all religions to his court – invited Dādū, and was deeply touched by Dādū's exposition on the loving nature and character of God. Dādū came to be known as Dādū Dayāl, Dādū the merciful, for his extremely compassionate nature. His works are relatively well preserved through the efforts of his disciple and successor, Rajjab.

Damascus Document Full name, the *Document of the New Covenant in the Land of Damascus;* first discovered in 1896–97 in the *genizah* (storeroom) of the Ezra synagogue in Cairo as two tenth- and twelfth-century manuscripts, and published as *Fragments of a Zadokite Work,* because those to whom the text refers (often presumed to have been Essenes), called themselves as the Sons of *Zadok* (the Righteous One, the Teacher of Righteousness); extensive fragments of the same document were subsequently discovered among the Dead Sea Scrolls in caves near Khirbet Qumran, dated to before 68 CE, confirming that the sectarians were those who once lived at Khirbet Qumran. The document first expounds the group's religious teaching, and speaks of the *Zadok;* it then sets forth various moral and administrative statutes and guidelines relating to the running of the community.

See also: **Dead Sea Scrolls, The Essenes** (1.4).

Daniel A biblical book from the *Writings (Hagiographa)*, falling into two parts; chapters 1–6 contain a collection of popular stories concerning young Daniel, a steadfast Jew, and his three companions during the Jewish exile in Babylon, in which Daniel and his friends emerge victorious from various trials, and the idolaters consequently glorify God. Chapters 7 to 12 describe apocalyptic visions, dreams and predictions granted to Daniel during the same period, and are also set in Babylonia. Chapters 1 to 2:3 are in Hebrew, chapters 2:4 to chapter 7 are in Aramaic, the remainder is in Hebrew.

The provenance of *Daniel* is a matter of debate. Some scholars suggest two authors, others argue for the unity of the whole. The narrative is both internally inconsistent, and also contains a number of historical inaccuracies. From this evidence, many scholars believe the book to have been written from oral tradition, long after the events described, to bolster faith at a time of trial. From historical material in chapter 11, the text is dated by many to the time of the persecution under Antiochus Epiphanes (the second Seleucid ruler of Palestine who tried forcibly to Hellenize the Jews), after his desecration of the Temple at Jerusalem, but before his death, and probably before the start of the Maccabeaen uprising, *i.e* between 167 and 164 BCE.

Dārābī, Shāh Muḥammad ibn-i Muḥammad-i A seventeenth-century Sufi, who founded the village of Dārābgird (in Fārs), before moving to Shīrāz; a contemporary of Shāh 'Abbās (1571–1629), the second Shāh in the Safavid dynasty (1502–1736); also believed to have lived for some time in Ahmedabad in Gujarat, India; author of the Sufi text, *Laṭīfah-'i Ghaybī* ('Subtleties of the Unseen').

Dariyā Sāhib of Bihar (1674–1780) An Indian Saint *(Sant)* and poet, of whom – like so many *Sants* – very little is known; born into the family of a Muslim tailor in the village of Dharkandhā in Bihar, although it seems that his father was probably a Hindu who had converted to Islam under duress from the Emperor Aurangzeb (ruled 1658–1707); taught the practice of *Nām bhakti* (devotion to the Name).

According to writings attributed to Dariyā Sāhib (notably, *Gyān Dīpak*), he said that he had taken eighteen births in this world, in five of which he had taught the path of the *Shabd*, remaining partially hidden in the rest. According to tradition, when Dariyā was one month old, a holy man visited his home. The mother presented the baby to the holy man, who looked at him intently, named him Dariyā, and instructed the mother to take good care of him. Ultimately, the same holy man became Dariyā's *Satguru*. Dariyā never looked upon his *Satguru* as a human being, always referring to him as the Lord or *Sat Purush* (true Lord). Who his *Satguru* was is unknown.

According to Dariyā's poetry, he was married, in conformity with the prevalent custom, when only nine years old. Dariyā observes that he could hardly understand the festivities of the occasion, but remarks that the one who joined him in wedlock had performed considerable austerities in past lives. He recalls that his childhood was passed in innocence, but as he grew, worldly attachments began to develop, since the inner Sound was still dormant. When he was 16 years old, he became withdrawn. In dreams, he would often recite verses, which he would remember on waking. Flashes of light would intermittently appear. When he was 20, he "had the inner experience of all", and "realized the state of emancipation, free from the cycle of the world".

Dariyā's verses also relate a story concerning his interaction with a local *paṇḍit,* Ganesh Upādhyāya. The *paṇḍit* fell out with Dariyā over the latter's condemnation of the worship a local idol, particularly the animal sacrifices made to the idol. Dariyā was subjected to abuse, and popular legend augments the references in his poetry. It is said that one of Dariyā's supporters took the idol at night, and buried it. Ultimately, Dariyā revealed where the idol was to be be found on condition that animal sacrifices ceased. But when the idol was dug up, it was discovered to have a broken nose, which greatly annoyed the *paṇḍit.*

Thus the dispute continued until, one day, the *paṇḍit* saw Dariyā seated on the banks of the Ganges at a place some distance from their village. Commencing his habitual abuse, the *paṇḍit* said he would only believe what Dariyā had to say if Dariyā brought the Ganges to wash his (Dariyā's) feet. Dariyā replied humbly that the Ganges would go wherever the Lord willed it to go. The *paṇḍit* returned to the village and, in order to discredit Dariyā, told everyone that Dariyā had said that the Ganges would come and wash his feet. Meanwhile, Dariyā was advised by a passing mendicant to remain where he was. In the morning, a crowd of villagers having gathered around Dariyā, they witnessed a wave rise up from the Ganges, which washed his feet. At this, all the people, including the *paṇḍit* became his devotees. Such are the legends that characteristically surround the lives of holy men.

It seems from his poetry that, Dariyā encountered his *Satguru* from time to time. When his *Satguru* appointed Dariyā as a Master in his own right, Dariyā made his headquarters in Dharkandhā, and accepted disciples who were both renunciates and householders. Judging from the current spread of his school, he must also have travelled extensively throughout Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Nepal. In 1810, thirty years after Dariyā's death, the British traveller, Francis Buchanan, visited Dharkandhā during the time of Dariyā's successor, Ṭekā Dās. Buchanan records that the centre then owned 101 *bīghās* (acres) of land, given to Dariyā by the Nawāb of Bihar and Bengal. According to Dariyā's writings, he seems to have jointly appointed two disciples, Guṇa Dās and Ṭekā Dās as his successors.

Dariyā is credited with at least 21 works, including *Brahm Vivek* ('Understanding of God'), *Chune hue Shabd* ('Selected Verses'), *Dariyā Sāgar* ('Ocean of Dariyā'), *Gyān Dīpak* ('Lamp of Knowledge'), *Gyān Ratna* ('Jewel of Knowledge'), *Gyān Svarodaya* ('Arising of the Knowledge of Sound'), *Nirbhay Gyān* ('Fearless Knowledge'), *Prem Mūl* ('Root of Love'), *Sahasrānī* ('The Thousand (Verses'), *Shabd* ('Word'), and *Vivek Sāgar* ('Ocean of Understanding'). His native language was Hindi, but he also wrote *Dariyānāmah* ('Book of Dariyā') in Persian and *Brahma-Chaitanya* ('God-Consciousness') in Sanskrit. It is possible, however, that Dariyā himself wrote very little, the works attributed to him having been written down by his disciples or even later followers from the poetry he recited and the things he said.

At the present time, the Dariyā school has around 150 centres spread throughout Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Nepal, the main centre being at Dariyā's birthplace of Dharkandhā.

Dariyā Sāhib of Rajasthan (1676–1758) An Indian mystic; born into a Rajasthan family of Muslim cotton carders; the author of at least two books in Hindi, *Satya Prakāsh* ('Light of Truth') and *Prem Prakāsh* ('Light of Love'), but unlike his namesake, Dariyā Sāhib of Bihar, very few of his compositions have survived. His *Guru* was Prem Jī, a disciple of Dādū Dayāl.

Dasam Granth *Lit.* tenth book; the collected works attributed to the tenth Sikh *Guru*, though most scholars are of the opinion that its varied contents are not all the work of the same author.

See **Sikhism** (1.11).

Dātastān-i Dēnīk (Pv) *Lit.* ordinances *(dātastān)* of religion *(dēnīk);* one of the more well-known Zoroastrian texts written during the Sassanian rule (224–651 CE) of Iran.

See also: **Zarathushtra and Zoroastrianism** (1.3).

Dead Sea Scrolls Ancient manuscripts on leather, papyrus and copper, largely in Hebrew and Aramaic, with some later texts in Greek and Nabataean, discovered between 1947 and the mid-1960s in caves and ancient ruins in the Judaean wilderness. These scrolls provide the earliest extant manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible, and cast new light on Judaism and some aspects of Jewish history from the fourth century BCE to 135 CE.

Documents were found at five principal sites. The most fruitful were 11 caves near the ruins of the ancient settlement of Khirbet Qumran, often presumed to have been Essene, on the northwest shores of the Dead Sea. These

manuscripts, widely believed to have been written mainly between 100 BCE and 68 AD (though a few have been dated to as early as the mid-third century BCE), include around 400 sectarian writings, as well as about 100 biblical texts representing the entire Hebrew Bible with the exception of Esther.

Other sites yielded further biblical texts, as well as legal and other documents left by fugitives of the army of the Jewish freedom fighter, Simon Bar Kokhba (*d.*135), including a number of his letters. At another site were found about 40 badly deteriorated papyri, dated to around 375–335 BCE, the oldest papyri ever discovered in Palestine, and which had been left in a cave by Samaritans massacred there by the army of Alexander the Great in 331 BCE.

All the scrolls were put under the control of a small committee of scholars in Israel and the USA. The majority of the longer, more complete documents were published soon after their discovery, but publication of the remainder (many no more than tiny, brittle fragments) was very slow, and access to the documents was severely restricted. With the announcement in 1991, however, that a previously unpublished manuscript had been reconstructed by computer from a published concordance, the Huntington Library in San Marino, California announced complete freedom of access to its library of photographic facsimiles of the scrolls, and the official scholars of the Israeli Antiquities Authority had little option but to lift their own restrictions.

Death of Joseph A Coptic apocryphal text of uncertain date in which Jesus, sitting on the Mount of Olives, tells his disciples the story of "my father Joseph, the blessed old man who was a carpenter", and of his death at the age of 111. The story is largely an embellishment of the gospel stories.

Death of St John See **Decease of St John**.

Decease of St John A short Christian text, with gnostic overtones, probably dating from the mid-second century, recounting the legend of John the apostle's last words, and the relinquishing of his life while standing in a grave dug at his request by his disciples; extant in Greek, Syriac and Arabic, although there is considerable variation between these texts.

Dēnkart (Pv) *Lit.* acts of the religion; an encyclopaedic work on Zoroastrianism, written in the ninth century CE during a brief Zoroastrian renaissance under Muslim rule, summarizing the contents of the 21 *nasks* (books) of the *Avestā*.

See also: **Zarathushtra and Zoroastrianism** (1.3).

Deuteronomy See **Pentateuch**.

Devī Upanishad (S) *Lit.* the *Upanishad* of the Goddess *(Devī);* a later text, belonging to the *Atharva Veda,* set in the form of a dialogue between the gods and *Durgā* or *Mahādevi* (*lit.* great goddess). Great significance is attached to this *Upanishad* in the tantric form of *Durgā* worship.

See also: **Upanishads**.

Dhammapada (Pa) *Lit.* way or words *(pada)* of truth, religion, righteousness or spirituality *(dhamma);* the best-known and most-quoted text of the Buddhist Pali canon; the second text of the *Khuddaka Nikāya* ('Short Collection') of the *Suttapiṭaka* ('Basket of Discourses'); a collection of largely moral and ethical teachings, believed to be as given by the Buddha to his disciples; written in a simple, aphoristic style, and arranged into 423 stanzas in 26 chapters; drawn mostly from other Buddhist canonical texts, and from the storehouse of wisdom sayings current in India. The original *Dhammapada* is in Pali; Prakrit, Sanskrit and Chinese versions are also extant, with some variations. The text, which is markedly simpler in content than the majority of Buddhist texts, is popular in both *Theravāda* and *Mahāyāna* traditions, and has been used as a manual for novices in Sri Lanka for centuries, where it is said that every monk knows it by heart.

See also: **Buddhism** (1.12).

Dharamdās (*c.* 1420–1532) A rich merchant and banker of Bāndhogaṛh in Uttar Pradesh, India, who possessed a devotional bent of mind from early childhood; a believer in the traditional rites, rituals and idol worship of Hinduism until he met Kabīr, who initiated him into the practice of the mystic Name or Word; the author of much poetry, some of it written in the name of Kabīr. The *Anurāg Sāgar,* generally attributed to Kabīr, was probably written by Dharamdās, although in the narrative of the book, it is Kabīr who is speaking.

Dhū al-Nūn al-Miṣrī (796–859) *Lit.* the man of the fish *(dhū al-nūn),* the Egyptian (al-Miṣrī); real name, Thawbān ibn Ibrāhīm; an early Sufi, credited as the first to articulate the distinction between *ma'rifah* (mystic knowledge) and conventional intellectual knowledge, and to connect *ma'rifah* with the love of God *(maḥabbah).*

Dhyāna Bindu Upanishad (S) *Lit.* point *(bindu)* of contemplation *(dhyāna) Upanishad;* belonging to the *Yajur Veda;* addresses the subjects of *Brahman,* the significance of *Praṇava (Om),* the unspoken knowledge of the soul, and the form of *yoga* required to attain it.

See also: **Upanishads**.

Dialogue of the Saviour One of the Nag Hammadi gnostic texts, very poorly preserved in many places, set as conversations between the "Saviour", presumed to be Jesus, and his disciples, notably Mary, Judas and Matthew; the questions and answers largely revolve around the sayings of Jesus recorded in both the canonical gospels and the more gnostically oriented *Gospel of Thomas;* probably dates from the first or second century.

Dick Fool Bull (*b.*1883) A nineteenth-century Lakota (Sioux) Native American flutemaker; the uncle and close relative of Leonard Crow Dog. Born, perhaps, in 1883, he remembered the events of the 1890 Massacre at Wounded Knee. In 1973, he was still living, close to 90 years old, and told the story of Wounded Knee to Leonard Crow Dog. He was the last flutemaker and player in his tribe.

Diogenēs Laertius A third-century Greek philosopher; remembered for his work, *Lives, Teachings and Sayings of Famous Philosophers,* a compilation of gossip, biographies, doctrinal summaries, and reproductions of significant material such as wills and philosophical writings concerning the Greek philosophers. Diogenēs quotes from hundreds of sources, most of which were known to him only second hand. Although the authenticity of his work must therefore be kept constantly under review, it remains the most important extant secondary source of information on the Greek philosophers. The oldest extant manuscript is dated to the twelfth century CE.

Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth A Hermetic text from the Nag Hammadi codices whose original title is lost; set as a dialogue between the spiritual Master, Hermēs Trismegistus, and an unnamed disciple, depicting how the disciple is led to a mystical vision of the eighth and ninth spiritual spheres by his Master "who is *Nous* (Mind)", also described as the "Power *(Dynamis)*".

Dīwān Malkuta 'Laita (Md.) *Lit.* verses *(dīwān)* of lofty *('laita)* kingship *(malkuta);* a Mandaean text comprising the answers to questions put to an exalted spirit of light.

Doctrine of Addai the Apostle A Syriac document, preserved in a single manuscript, probably composed during the early fourth century, and based upon an exchange of fictitious letters, probably dating from the second or third centuries, between King Agbar of Edessa and Jesus. Hearing of the power of Jesus from his own officials, King Agbar writes a letter to Jesus requesting that Jesus should come and heal him of a long-term illness. Jesus replies that after he has returned to his Father, he will send one of his disciples. After Jesus' death, Judas Thomas deputes Addai, said in the text to have

been one of the "seventy-two" disciples sent out by Jesus according to Luke (10:1, where the number is actually seventy) to visit the king. The story of Addai, his deeds (including the healing of the king), his sayings and his discourses, is subsequently written down by the king's scribe, Labubna.

Drower, Lady E.S. An English scholar of the mid-twentieth century who lived in Iraq for many years, made many visits to the Mandaean centres in Iraq and Iran, was able to obtain copies of (and to translate into English) a number of Mandaean sacred texts; author of a number of books on the Mandaeans.

Dūlandās (1660–1778) An Indian mystic; born into a family of landlords in the village of Samesī in Lucknow District, Uttar Pradesh; an initiate of Jagjīvan Sāhib; taught at his spiritual centre in Rāi Bareily, Uttar Pradesh, until his death at the age of 118; the author of many devotional poems which speak of the divine Music of the Word, of *karma* and of salvation through a perfect Master. His known works are *Bhram Vināsh* ('Elimination of Illusion'), *Shabdāvalī* ('Collection of Shabds'), *Dohāvalī* ('Collection of Dohās') and *Mangal Gīt* ('Joyful Song').

Ecclesiastes A part of the Jewish Wisdom literature included in the canon of the Hebrew and Christian Bibles; attributed in the first verse to Solomon ("son of David, king in Jerusalem"), although linguistic evidence suggests it was written much later, probably somewhere between the fifth and third century BCE.

Eleazar ha-Kallir One of the earliest *paytanim* (liturgical poets); his *piyuttim* (hymns) written for all the main festivals are regarded as linguistically inventive classics. When he lived is uncertain, but it was probably between the sixth and eighth centuries (CE) in Palestine.

Elimah Rabbati (He) *Lit.* great work *(rabbati)* to Elim *(elimah)*, referring to the sections of the book, drawn from the verse, "And they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs of water, and seventy palm trees; and they encamped there by the water" (*Exodus* 15:27, *KB*); a book by Moses Cordovero (1522–70), a Kabbalist of Safed, Palestine, systematically explaining Kabbalistic concepts in detail; written in 1567–68, published by Brody in 1881.

See also: **Moses Cordovero**.

Empedoclēs (*c.*490–430 BCE) A Greek Pythagorean philosopher, poet, mystic, spiritual teacher and scientist, whose writings are known only from fragments

preserved in the writings of others, comprising about 400 lines from his *Peri physeos* ('On Nature') and less than 100 lines from his *Katharmoi* ('Purifications'); regarded by Aristotle as the inventor of rhetoric, and by Galen as the founder of Italian medicine; born in Sicily, died in Greece, little else being known of his personal life.

Deeply influenced by the fifth-century mystic and philosopher, Parmenidēs, who emphasized the essential unity of all things, Empedoclēs taught that all matter is composed of the four elements (earth, water, fire and air), and that things changed according to the ebb and flow of these basic ingredients. He also taught the reality of transmigration of the soul, and the existence of two forces, Love and Discord. Love draws souls back to the unity of the Divine, while the role of Discord is to keep souls separate.

See also: **Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans** (1.9).

Encyclopedia Judaica First published in 1972; considered the most reliable contemporary source of in-depth information on all subjects pertaining to Judaism. The CD-ROM edition includes all original 16 volumes, the year books and Decennials of 1982 and 1992, as well as selected updates not included in the printed versions.

Enoch (He. Ḥanokh) The name of two biblical characters; one is the son of Cain; the other, representing the seventh generation of the human race, is the son of Jared and father of Methusaleh. *Genesis* (5:23) says that this second Enoch "walked with God; then he was no more for God took him". This cryptic and enigmatic reference hints at a longer legend, which is found in other Near Eastern sources, and which appears in early non-canonical texts, as well as medieval mystical literature, where Enoch is the transmitter of mystical knowledge. Enoch is also identified with the prophet Idrīs mentioned in the *Qur'ān*. There are three books bearing the name of Enoch.

See also: **1 Enoch**, **2 Enoch**, **3 Enoch**.

Ephesians See **Colossians**.

Ephraim Syrus (*c*.306–373) Also called, Ephraim the Syrian; born at Nisibis, in Mesopotamia, then under Roman dominion; Christian theologian, poet, hymnist and doctrinal adviser to the Eastern Church; student of Jacob, Bishop of Nisibis, where he lived during the time of Jacob's three successors; survived three unsuccessful sieges laid to the city by the Persian king, Shāpūr; abandoned Nisibis (like most Christians), and moved to Edessa (now Urfa) after Nisibis finally capitulated to Persian rule, in 363; took up residence as a solitary in a cell on the hill above the city, where many ascetics

sought retreat; through his writings, became the most influential personality in fourth-century Syriac Christianity; appointed deacon by Basil the Great, Metropolitan of Caesarea in Cappadocia (370–379); reputed to have possessed an irascible nature, declining any higher Church appointment; said to have avoided being made bishop by feigning madness.

Ephraim is remembered for his voluminous writings, often tedious, which had a significant impact on both the Greek and Latin Church. Much of his literary output is in verse, including polemical, theological and historical works. His writings include bible commentaries, theological treatises, sermons and hymns (which became popular in Syriac churches), as well as *Carmina Nisibena* ('Songs of Nisibis') – a record in verse of the events in Nisibis leading to Persian rule. Some of his writings are directed against gnostics who lived before his time – particularly the second-century, Marcion and Bardesanēs, and the third-century Mānī – as well as non-'orthodox' Christian groups, such as the Arians. He also edited the *Diatessaron,* a Syriac-Greek conflation of the four gospels into one document; provided a graphic description of heaven and hell; and advocated devotion to the Virgin Mary, believing in her sinlessness and perfect faith. He died at Edessa.

Epicharmus (*c*.530–440 BCE) A Greek comic playwright of Sicily, said to written over 50 plays, of which only fragments survive, quoted in the writings of others. Many were clearly parodies, satires, farces and burlesques in which he poked fun even at the gods, but also included some moralistic philosophy in form of aphorisms, later collected separately, and sometimes forged. Epicharmus is said in some ancient texts to have also written on ethics and medicine. Traditionally, he was believed to have been a disciple of Pythagoras.

Epic of Gilgamesh A collection of legends told in Akkadian (the language of a Semitic people who lived in the third millennium BCE), concerning the Mesopotamian semidivine hero, Gilgamesh, probably the Gilgamesh who ruled Uruk sometime in the first half of the third millennium BCE; survives in its most complete form on 12 incomplete tablets found at Nineveh in the library of the Assyrian king, Ashurbanipal (reigned 668–627 BCE), unearthed during the nineteenth century. Gaps in these tablets have been partly filled by fragments found elsewhere in Mesopotamia and Anatolia (now the Asian part of Turkey). Five short Sumerian poems, dating from the second millennium BCE, also relate stories of Gilgamesh. The best-known of these legends is probably Gilgamesh's search for the Plant of Life that will make him immortal.

See also: **Sumerian and Mesopotamian Spirituality** (1.3).

Epictetus (*c.*50–120 CE) A Greek Stoic philosopher, probably born at Hierapolis in Phrygia (now Turkey), who taught self-renunciation and universal brotherhood; favoured by many early Christians thinkers because of the religious tone of his teachings; passed his boyhood as a slave, but was able to attend the discourses of the Stoic, Musonius Rufus; later became a freedman, but was always lame and in poor health; expelled from Rome in 90 CE, along with other philosophers, by the Emperor Domitian, who was annoyed by the support of the Stoics to opponents of his tyranny; passed the remainder of his life in Nicapolis in Greece. The essence of Epictetus' philosophy was recorded in two books by his disciple, Arrian: *Discourses,* not all of which is extant, and *Encheiridion* ('Manual'), a collection of aphorisms summarizing his teachings.

Epiphanius (*c.*315–403) Born at Besanduc, near Eleutheropolis, in Palestine; probably raised in a Nicene Christian family; educated by monks; travelled to Egypt to study and practise monasticism, where he was influenced by his friend and teacher, Hilarion, an ascetic; returned to Palestine, founding a monastery at Eleutheropolis, of which he became the abbot.

In 367, possibly as part of a trend to appoint bishops from the monasteries, Epiphanius was appointed Bishop of Salamis (Constantia), near modern Famagusta, in Cyprus, where Hilarion had moved a short while before. He passed the remainder of his life in this post, teaching monasticism and campaigning against heretics. He is renowned for his fanatic campaign against 'heresies', especially Origenism and the gnosticism. Epiphanius lacked balance and sound judgment, traits amply illustrated in his *Panarion* (374–377), an exceptionally biased and defamatory account of 80 'heresies' and his refutation of them, but which is nevertheless useful as a historical document when treated circumspectly. He died at sea, in 403, returning to Cyprus from Constantinople, where he had travelled in pursuit of his stand against Origenism.

Epistle of Barnabas An early Christian epistle, written in Greek, first discovered in the fourth-century biblical manuscript, *Codex Sinaiticus;* ascribed by tradition to the apostle Barnabas, the companion of Paul; actually, the work of an unknown author sometime after 70 CE, possibly as late as 130 CE; explains passages from the Hebrew Bible in an allegorical and sometimes esoteric manner, finding references to Jesus and Christianity in the Jewish scriptures.

Epistula Apostolorum (L) *Lit.* epistle of the apostles; also known as the *Testament of Our Lord in Galilee;* a mid-second-century apocryphal text, purporting to be an encyclical sent out by the twelve apostles after the Resurrection, recording conversations held between Jesus and his disciples; written in

Greek, but survives only in Ethiopic, with some fragments in Coptic and Latin.

Esther A biblical book, telling the story of the Jews' suffering under the Persian king, Ahasuerus, in the kingdom of Shushan, and their ultimate rescue through the agency of the beautiful Esther, whom the king favours and marries; probably written during the second century BCE; the subject of many hypotheses concerning its origins, both mythical and historical.

Eugnostos the Blessed See **Sophia of Jesus Christ**.

Eusebius (*c*.265–340) An early Christian; born, baptized and ordained in Caesarea, in Palestine; a student of the scholarly presbyter, Pamphilus, who was persecuted and martyred in 310; may have been imprisoned by the Romans at Caesarea, since he was reproached many years after for having saved himself by a cowardly act; appointed Bishop of Caesarea around 313.

About 318, Eusebius became involved in the dispute concerning the views of the Alexandrian priest, Arius, who held that the Son was subordinate to the Father. Expelled from Alexandria, Arius took refuge in Caesarea, claiming Eusebius as a supporter. Eusebius maintained that Arius had been misrepresented, but at a synod in Antioch in 325, Eusebius and two of his colleagues were provisionally excommunicated for their Arian views. However, at the Council of Nicaea, later that year, called by the Emperor Constantine I, Eusebius was cleared.

Having only recently, with the accession of Constantine, attained official Roman sanction, various doctrinal and political groupings within the Church were lobbying for power and the emperor's approval. Constantine himself was interested less in what he regarded as hairsplitting than in the need for a unified Christianity as the basis for a stable empire. Even so, the political and theological wrangling continued, and Eusebius was later involved in the expulsion of Athanasius of Alexandria (335), Marcellus of Ancyra (*c*.336) and Eustathius of Antioch (*c*.337). After the emperor's death in 337, Eusebius wrote the *Life of Constantine*, a rose-tinted eulogy whose main historical value is his use of some primary source material.

Eusebius was a voluminous writer on a wide selection of Christian topics. He is largely remembered, however, for his *Ecclesiastical History* or *Church History*, the first history of what became orthodox Christianity, begun possibly during the last period of Roman persecution, and revised several times between 312 and 324, adding in events up to the year prior to the Council of Nicaea (325). The work is valuable for its quotations from sources no longer extant, and for some of the historical details provided. But the information provided cannot always be relied upon, and often the book is more of a justification and eulogy of Christianity than an accurate portrayal of events.

Eustathius (*d.c.*1194) A twelfth-century scholar, educator, author and reformer of the Greek Orthodox Church; commonly regarded as a saint; a monk in the monastery of St Florus in Constantinople, deacon at the basilica of Hagia Sophia, teacher in the Patriarchal school, and master of petitions in the imperial court; in 1175, appointed Bishop and, before consecration, Metropolitan of Thessalonica, a position he retained for the rest of his life; in 1185, during the siege and sack of Thessalonica, negotiated his people's safety with the Normans under William II of Sicily, which events he chronicled in *De Thessalonica urbe a normannis capta* ('On the Norman Conquest of Thessalonica'); reformer and rejuvenator of the Greek Orthodox Church, criticizing the clergy in his *On Hypocrisy,* and advising a complete reappraisal and revitalizing of monastic life in his *Inquiry into the Monastic Life;* author of works on the Greek classics, including a commentary on Homer's *Odyssey,* which he interprets as an allegory of the soul.

Exodus See **Pentateuch**.

Expository Treatise on the Soul An allegorical treatise from the Nag Hammadi library, telling the story of the descent of the pure and virgin soul from the Father into this world. Here, she becomes attached to the things and people of the world, symbolized by her giving her love to all and sundry, and becoming a prostitute. Eventually, realizing that no love of this world will last, she prays to the Father for help. The Father therefore sends to her a divine Bridegroom, a Saviour and, cleansing herself in the mystic bridal chamber within, she unites inwardly with him. In this way, she is "brought out of the land of Egypt", made pure and virginal once again, and returns to her divine Father. The unknown author quotes both Greek and Jewish texts in support of the theme.

Ezekiel The biblical book of the sixth-century (BCE) prophet Ezekiel, during the Jewish exile in Babylonia, consisting of a record of the prophet's visions. Most famous are his vision of the divine throne and chariot, accompanied by lights, colours, sounds and heavenly beings, and his vision of dead bones rising again to life.

Ezra A biblical book recounting the history of the Jews' return to Jerusalem from exile in Babylonia during the mid-fifth-century BCE, under the leadership of the high priest and scribe, Ezra, who was sent by the Persian king, Artaxerxēs I, to reinstate observance of the Jewish law and the re-establishment of the Temple in Jerusalem; probably written in the fourth century BCE or later.

See also **Nehemiah**.

Fă Hsiĕn (*d.c.*420) *Lit.* splendour of religious law; surnamed Kūng; the Buddhist name of a Chinese Buddhist monk, born at Shānsī in the fourth century CE, during the Eastern Chìn dynasty, at a time when Buddhism was enjoying unusual imperial patronage; known for his 10-year pilgrimage to India (which he reached in 402), the 'holy land' of Buddhism, to collect Buddhist texts unknown in China, and to visit places associated with the Buddha's life and the most important seats of Buddhist learning; translator into Chinese of the many Sanskrit Buddhist texts so collected, including the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* and *Vinaya* (rules of discipline for monks) of the *Mahāsanghika* school, both of which were to significantly influence Chinese Buddhist schools and their monastic way of life; author of *Fó Kuó Chì* ('Record of Buddhist Kingdoms'), also called *Records of the Western World*, which provides valuable information concerning early Buddhism in India, as well as hair-raising accounts of crossing waterless deserts and climbing precipitous mountain passes, culminating in the account of his perilous voyage home from Ceylon, during which he was shipwrecked and storm-blown, spending 200 days at sea until finally blown to a port on the Shāntūng Peninsula.

Falling Asleep of Mary A Coptic work said to be a discourse delivered by Theodosius, Patriarch of Alexandria (535–566), relating a legendary story of the death of Jesus' mother, Mary; another Coptic text of the same name is attributed to Abba Evodius. Theodosius was a leader of the Monophysites in Egypt and Syria, known for their asceticism and mystical prayer.

Farīd, Shaykh (*c.*1181–1265) Real name Farīd al-Dīn Mas'ūd, better known by the popular title *Ganj-i Shakar* (*lit.* treasure house of sweetness); also called Bābā Farīd and Shaykh Farīd; a Muslim mystic whose date of birth varies between 1173 to 1181 in different accounts; born into a Muslim family at Kahtwāl near Multān in the Punjab (now in Pakistan), spending the later part of his life in Pāk Pattan (formerly Ajodhan) in western Punjab (now Pakistan), where his successors taught for several generations; adopted a rigorous ascetic discipline in his search for God, until he met his Master, Khwājah Quṭb al-Dīn Bakhtiyār Kākī of Delhi who initiated him into the path of the divine Word when he was about 20 years old; the earliest recorded mystic poet of the Punjabi language; also wrote in Arabic, Persian, Urdu and Hindi; a few of his poems are included in the *Ādi Granth,* although some scholars have suggested that a number of the poems attributed to Farīd may have actually been written by his successors, who wrote in Farīd's name.

Farqānī, Sa'īd al-Dīn ibn Aḥmad al- A thirteenth-century Sufi, writer and teacher of the school of Ibn 'Arabī; introduced to Sufism by Shaykh Najīb

al-Dīn 'Alī ibn Buzghush of Shīrāz (*d.*1279); a disciple of Shaykh Shihāb al-Dīn 'Umar Suhravardī; later came into contact with Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī (*d.*1274), benefitting from him, and then from Shaykh Muḥammad ibn al-Sukrān al-Baghdādī and others; travelled to Egypt along with several companions, where he began teaching Ibn Fāriḍ's *al-Tā'īyah* ('Poem Rhyming in T'), also called *Naẓm al-Sulūk* ('Sequence of Progress'). His works include Persian and Arabic commentaries on Ibn Fāriḍ's *al-Tā'īyah* and *Muntahá al-Madārik* ('Highest Mental Faculty'); died sometime between 1292 and 1301.

Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan See **Avot de Rabbi Nathan**.

First Apocalypse of James A gnostic text from the Nag Hammadi library of which much is lost, entitled the *Apocalypse of James*, but designated the "First" by modern scholars to distinguish it from a different text of otherwise the same name; set as a dialogue between Jesus and James the brother of Jesus, in which James voices his concerns over the suffering both he and Jesus will soon experience, and about how he will escape "this bond of flesh" and "reach Him-who-is" in the face of the hostile *archons* (powers, rulers). Jesus responds by consoling him, and assuring him that his redemption is assured. In the text, the (Jewish) scriptures are also described by Jesus as originating with one of "limited understanding".

First Book of Jeu See **Bruce Codex**.

Foundation of the Kingdom of Righteousness (Pa. *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*) *Lit.* setting in motion *(appavattana)* the wheel *(cakka)* of the Law *(Dhamma);* hence, the inauguration or foundation of the kingdom of the *Dhamma* (Law, Righteousness); a late-fourth- or early-third-century (BCE) discourse contained in the Buddhist *Suttapiṭaka* ('Basket of Discourses'), a collection of sayings, conversations and discourses attributed to the Buddha, and a part of the Pali canon; explains the 'four noble truths' and the Noble Eightfold Path leading to Arhatship; of unknown authorship, though generally accepted as summarizing the Buddha's teachings.

See also: **Buddhism** (1.12).

Francis de Sales (1567–1622) French name, François de Sales; born at the Castle of Sales, near Annecy in Savoy, in southeast France; educated at La Roche and Annecy, before attending the Jesuit college of Clermont in Paris (1580–88), going on to study civil law at Padua, in Italy, where he gained his doctorate in 1591; practised law briefly, before turning to religion (Roman Catholicism). Following ordination in 1593 at Annecy, the main city

of Savoy, Francis began intensive missionary work in Chablais, a region which had previously broken away from Savoy and become Calvinist, but had recently been regained by the devout Catholic duke of Savoy, Charles Emmanuel. No doubt using the powers of persuasion which had attracted him to law, Francis managed to reconvert most of the population. In 1602, he was made Bishop of Geneva, a post he held until his death at Lyons in 1622. In 1610, with Jane Frances de Chantal, he co-founded the Visitation of Holy Mary (Visitation Nuns), which became an order largely devoted to teaching. He died at Lyons in 1622.

The author of a number of works, Francis de Sales is largely remembered for his two devotional classics, *Introduction to a Devout Life* and *Treatise on the Love of God.* The former was written for those seeking spiritual perfection while leading an active external life, since it was commonly believed at the time that the truly spiritual life was only for those who withdrew from society. He had begun writing notes on the subject as early as 1602. In 1607, he gave a current set of the notes to a relative, who showed them to Father Jean Fourier of the Society of Jesus. Jean Fourier thought them so valuable, he urged Francis to have them printed. A first edition was printed in 1609, but was later thoroughly revised, with the addition of new material, and republished in 1619.

The Love of God was written over a period of seven years (1609–16), in odd moments snatched from a busy schedule, when he was rarely able to spend as much as two hours at a time on it. When commencing this work, he wrote, "I shall try to inscribe on my heart what I succeed in putting down on paper." In 1923, Pope Pius XI declared Francis de Sales the patron saint of writers and journalists.

Francis of Assisi (*c.*1181–1226) Italian name, Francesco d'Assisi; original name, Francesco di Pietro di Bernardone; born the son of a cloth merchant (Pietro di Bernardone), in the Duchy of Spoleto, central Italy; baptized Giovanni on the wish of his mother, while his father was on a business trip to France, but renamed Francesco on his father's return; learnt Latin at school, later acquiring some knowledge of French, especially troubadour songs, which he liked to sing; an exuberant youth, and a natural leader among his friends; joined in the war between Assisi and Perugia, was captured and held prisoner for a year, falling seriously ill on his return; in 1205, tried to join the papal forces under Count Gentile, against Frederick II in Apulia, but had a vision or powerful dream when in Spoleto, instructing him to return to Assisi, and await a call to a different kind of battle; returned to Assisi, and gave himself to solitary prayer so that he might know God's intentions.

The life of Francis is surrounded by legend, but it seems that, during this period, he had a number of experiences that were significant for him:

a vision of Christ; an experience in Rome in which, dressed in rags, he begged alms with other beggars before St Peter's Basilica; and an incident in which he gave alms to a leper and kissed his hand, despite his repugnance of lepers. One day, at the ruined chapel of San Damiano, outside Assisi, he heard the crucifix above the altar command him to "repair my house, which, as you can see, is well-nigh in ruins". Francis went home, took a large quantity of cloth from his father's shop, and rode to Foligno where he sold both cloth and horse, and attempted to give the proceeds to the priest of the ruined chapel. His father was furious. First he tried to bring Francis before the civil authorities, but Francis refused to appear. Then he brought him before the bishop, but as the hearing was about to start, Francis removed his clothes, and handed them to his astonished father, claiming that thenceforth his true Father was in heaven. Dressed only in a hair shirt and a cloak, he then set off for the woods above the city.

Francis had now renounced family and possessions to embrace a life of poverty. Taking his instruction literally, he first repaired the chapel of San Damiano, followed by two others. In 1208, hearing at mass Christ's directions to his apostles to take no worldly possessions with them other than the clothes they stood up in, he began to preach Christ's way of poverty. Although only a layman, he attracted followers, and in 1209, he composed a simple rule of life founded on Jesus' gospel teachings. When his group numbered twelve, they went to Pope Innocent III, who somewhat hesitatingly gave his verbal consent to their rule. Although he advocated a life of poverty, Francis also advised his followers to earn their own living.

Francis and his street preachers, possessing nothing, having "sold all and given to the poor" (*Matthew* 19:21), preached at first in central Italy and, as their numbers grew, throughout the country. In 1212, he founded an order for women, the Poor Clares, named after a noble lady of Assisi who adopted his lifestyle and went to live in the chapel of San Damiano, where other women joined her. Around 1221, he founded the Third Order of Brothers and Sisters of Penance, for lay people who wanted to follow Franciscan principles without leaving their families. As time passed, the order extended outside Italy.

Francis was a man who believed in simplicity, in the absence of pretence, and in that lay his appeal. He spoke in everyday language, without rhetoric, emphasizing the basic teachings of Jesus – peace and love among men, absence of hatred, and love of all God's creation. According to one report, he attracted large gatherings, and people would crowd around him, wanting simply to touch him, and feel that they had received his blessing.

Probably in 1212, Francis set out for the Holy Land, but was shipwrecked on the Adriatic, and had to return. A year or so later, illness forced him to abandon a journey to the Spanish Moors. In 1217, he wanted to go to France, but was advised by Cardinal Ugolino of Segni to stay and take care of his

order in Italy. In 1219, he visited the crusaders who were besieging Damietta. It is also said that he entered the Saracen camp, where he preached to the *sulṭān,* who was so impressed that he permitted Francis to visit Palestine.

Dissension among the friars in Italy necessitated his return. There were now 5,000 friars, and his order was growing faster than any before, and some of the friars wanted to formalize the order, contrary to Francis' original intentions. He appointed a vicar to handle practical matters, and Pope Honorius III agreed a compulsory year of probation for new friars. Francis then drafted a new and amplified rule, officially approved in 1223, after which he increasingly withdrew from external affairs. He died in 1226, in his mid-forties, after a painful illness lasting two years, and almost completely blind from an eye disease he had contracted on his Middle Eastern travels.

Francis was not a literary man, and his authentic writings are few. Only the Franciscan rule, a short statement, some of the letters, and possibly some of the canticles are likely to be genuine, together with some of the records regarding the things he did and said.

Frank Fools Crow (1891–1989) A Lakota (Sioux) holy man and ceremonial chief of the Teton Sioux from the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota; the nephew of Black Elk.

See **Some Recent Native Americans** (1.14).

Galatians, Romans New Testament texts; Paul's letters to the Galatians and the Romans. *Galatians* is presumed to have been written to a church founded by Paul in the Galatian region of Asia Minor, probably from Ephesus around 53–54. The letter addresses a disturbance caused by the belief, expressed by some of the Gentiles (Greeks) in the community, that Gentile Christians should be circumcised and follow the Jewish law as a prerequisite for salvation. The community would have contained both Jews and Gentiles, but would have been predominantly Gentile.

In a letter full of emotional heat, Paul responds by first emphasizing that anyone who teaches something different from what he has already taught them should be condemned. He continues by defending his own position as an apostle, relating some of his personal background, telling the story of his calling, and claiming to have been chosen by God while still in his mother's womb. He insists that the message he teaches is God's message, not human. He also relates his side of the story concerning his meeting with Peter and the apostles in Jerusalem, 14 years after his calling, and his subsequent quarrel with Peter at Ephesus. The issues are all concerned with whether Gentiles should follow Jewish law.

Paul berates the Galatians for even considering the idea that they need to follow Jewish customs. He argues that the law was introduced by Moses,

long after God's original covenant with Abraham, only because of the peoples' transgressions. The law is thus temporal, an instructor existing only to counteract evil until the coming of the Messiah (Christ). After that, the law was no longer required. In Christ, all are free: the divisions of Jew and Gentile, man and woman, freeman and slave, and so on, no longer exist. Merely by belonging to Christ, Christians become the heirs of Abraham. If they submit to circumcision, then they are bound to follow the entire law. And if they look to the law, then they have separated from Christ and fallen from grace. Clearly wound up by the situation, Paul develops a number of ingenious arguments to prove his point.

He then advises that having gained freedom from the law, they should not take their feeling of liberty so far that they become self-indulgent. He admonishes them to serve each other, to maintain brotherly love, and to avoid human weaknesses (which he lists) that follow self-indulgence. "If you are guided by the Spirit" he tells them, "you will be in no danger of yielding to self-indulgence" (5:16, *JB*). He then ends with a summary of his letter, and signs off.

Romans is a much longer and more complex letter, written to the Romans ahead of his proposed visit to them. It is his only letter to a group over which Paul claims no apostolic authority. Because he made it a principle not to evangelize areas where Christian communities already existed, Paul explains that he will only be in transit, on his way to Spain. Since his letter to the *Galatians,* Paul has had time to structure and elaborate the same basic ideas, and it is these – together with other elements of his teachings – that form the main content of *Romans.* More of a theological treatise than a letter, it is the only surviving systematic account of Paul's theological beliefs. There is no record of the Roman response.

Chapters 1 to 11 contain the theological material, followed by three chapters of ethical and moral advice. Chapter 16 contains personal greetings to named individuals, which is surprising since Paul had never been to Rome. Chapter 16 may therefore be part of another letter, appended later. The final doxology is out of keeping with Paul's usual style, and is probably an addition by a later hand.

It is likely that *Romans* was written from Corinth, *c.*56. According to *Acts,* Paul's only visit to Rome was as a prisoner of the Romans, but he is clearly no prisoner when writing his letter. However, in *Romans,* Paul speaks of making a trip to Jerusalem before setting out for Rome. It was probably there that he was arrested, as per the story in *Acts,* and taken to Caesarea. In Caesarea, he spent two years in jail before being sent to Rome in 58, to appear before the emperor, where (according to *Acts*) he passed at least two further years. Paul is traditionally believed to have been martyred in Rome, probably before or during Nero's persecutions of 64.

See also: **Paul** (1.5).

Gallery of Chinese Immortals A small text written by Lionel Giles in the 1940s, being a compilation of tales regarding famous immortals, drawn from many Chinese sources.

Garuḍa Purāṇa (S) One of the 18 principal *Purāṇas,* of which there are several versions; named after Garuḍa, the king of birds and the vehicle of *Vishṇu,* though there is little in its contents to justify the name; deals with rites for the dying, the moment of death, funeral ceremonies, various after-death states, and so on.

See also: **Purāṇas**.

Gāthās (Av) *Lit.* songs; an Avestan word related to the Sanskrit *gītā* (song); the name of the only known writings of Zarathushtra, the earliest of all Zoroastrian sacred literature.

See also: **Zarathushtra and Zoroastrianism** (1.3).

Gauḍapāda A seventh-century Indian philosopher, one of the three well-known philosophers from roughly the same period as Shankara (*c.*788–820), who gave a monistic interpretation of Indian scriptures, the other two being Bhartṛihari and Maṇḍana Mishra; the *guru* of Govinda, who was Shankara's *guru;* the earliest known exponent of the *Advaita* (non-dualist) school of *Vedānta;* known for his *Māṇḍūkya Kārikā,* a verse commentary *(kārikā)* on the *Māṇḍūkya Upanishad,* preserved as a part of Shankara's commentary on both the *Upanishad* and Gauḍapāda's *Kārikā.*

The *Kārikā* first explains the *Upanishad,* then describes the unreality of the world and the oneness of Reality, and finally, in a section entitled the *Alātashānti* ('Extinguishing the Fire Brand'), explains the means of release from suffering. It is not coincidental that *Alātashānti* is a term commonly used by Buddhist writers. Part of Gauḍapāda's intention was to demonstrate that Buddhist *Mahāyāna* teachings, especially those of the *Yogāchāra* school, were not dissimilar to those of the *Upanishads.* He maintained that waking existence is as unreal as a dream, and that there is one Reality, obscured by *māyā,* which engenders spiritual ignorance. However, he disagreed with the *Yogāchāra* school who believed that mind *(chitta)* is real. For Gauḍapāda, mind itself was also a part of *māyā.* There is no individual self, only the eternal *ātman* (soul) is real.

Gawharīn, Ṣādiq A twentieth-century Iranian scholar and professor of Persian literature at Tehran University, who died in the 1950s; author of a number of works, including *Farhang-i Lughāt* ('Encyclopaedic Dictionary').

Genesis See **Pentateuch**.

Gharībdās (1717–78) An Indian Saint *(Sant);* born into an agricultural family in the village of Chhurānī in the District of Rohtak in Haryana; devoted to God from an early age, becoming a follower of the fifteenth-century, Kabīr, subsequently establishing a spiritual centre in his home village; the author of over 10,000 devotional songs concerning the Master and the *Shabd* (Word); not to be confused with Gharībdās (*b.*1575), the son of Dādū Dayāl, or the Gharībdās of Delhi, who was a disciple of Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh (1818–78).

Ghaṭ Rāmāyaṇ (H) *Lit.* the *Rāmāyaṇa* within the pitcher (*ghaṭ, i.e.* the body); the inner *Rāmāyaṇa;* a book written by the Indian Saint *(Sant),* Tulsī Sāhib (*c.*1763–1843), in the form of a dialogue between the Master and disciples and seekers. The dialogue concerns inner revelations or the inner ascent of the soul.

Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ṭūsī al-Shāfi'ī al- (1058–1111) Born and died in Ṭūs, in eastern Persia; a Sufi, but also one of the foremost theologians, philosophers and legalists of Islam; educated at Ṭūs, Jurjān and Nīshāpūr; invited to the court of Niẓām al-Mulk, the powerful vizier of the Saljūq rulers in 1085, who appointed him senior professor at the prestigious Niẓāmīyah college of Islamic studies in Baghdad in 1091, lecturing to over 300 students; passed through a spiritual crisis that left him unable to teach for some time; in 1095, decided to abandon his career, leaving Baghdad on the pretext of a pilgrimage to Mecca; disposed of his wealth, made provision for his family, and took up the life of a poor Sufi; travelled through Damascus and Jerusalem on his way to Mecca in 1096, afterwards settling at his home town of Ṭūs, where disciples joined him in a monastic life; was persuaded to return to Niẓāmīyah college in 1106, where he remained until his retirement in 1110; returned to Ṭūs, where he died the following year.

Although around 400 books are attributed to him, some being the same work under different titles, al-Ghazālī was probably the author of around 50 books only, a number of which are regarded as seminal works of orthodox Islamic theology. Through his *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* ('Revival of the Religious Sciences'), he integrated Sufism with orthodox Islam at a time when Sufism was deemed heretical. In *Mishkāt al-Anwār* ('Niche for Lights'), he describes the superiority of mystical experience over other forms of knowing. In his autobiographical *al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl* ('Deliverer from Error'), he explains why he gave up lecturing for the life of a Sufi. In *Maqāṣīd al-Falāsifah* ('Aims of the Philosophers'), he objectively expounds the teachings of unorthodox Islamic philosophers such as Ibn Sīnā, and in his *Tahāfut al-Falāsifa* ('Incoherence of the Philosophers'), he defends Islam against their ideas. Although he came to view theology as

inferior to mystical experience, there is nothing to indicate that he ever rejected the theology of orthodox Islam. For this reason, he became the first significant bridge between 'heretical' Sufism and orthodox Islam. Because of his dramatic 'conversion' to Sufism, Western scholars have tended to give more prominence to al-Ghazālī than to other significant Islamic thinkers.

Ghazālī, Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad, al- (*d.*1126) A Sufi and popular teacher; the younger brother of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, taking his place when his elder brother retired from teaching at the renowned Niẓāmīyah college of Islamic studies in Baghdad; author of an abridged version of al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* ('Revival of Religious Sciences'), as well as a number of treatises, including *Sawāniḥ* (*lit.* happenings; aphorisms on love), the *Risālat al-Ṭayr* ('Treatise on the Birds'), inspired by 'Aṭṭār's *Manṭiq al-Ṭayr* ('Conference of the Birds'), and a tract on the admissibility of *samā'* (listening to music).

Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā (S) A well-known, late-seventeenth-century treatise on *haṭha yoga,* consisting of 351 stanzas, in 7 lessons.

Ginzberg, Louis (1873–1953) Born in Poland, immigrated to the USA in 1899; a renowned teacher and scholar of *Midrash, Talmud* and *aggadah.* His work dealt mainly with the origins of *aggadah* (legend and rabbinic narrative), *halakhah* (law) and the literature of the *geonim* (the rabbis in the post-exilic period). His major work is *Legends of the Jews* in 7 volumes, published between 1909 and 1938.

Gītagovinda (S) *Lit.* (in which) the cowherd (*Govinda, i.e.* Kṛishṇa) is sung *(gīta);* thus, song of the cowherd; a lyrical poem, interspersed with 24 eight-line songs, portraying the love between Kṛishṇa (the divine cowherd) and the *gopīs* (wives and daughters of the other cowherds), especially his favourite, Rādhā, who symbolizes the soul; tells a tale of attraction, estrangement, yearning, and ultimately reconciliation through the help of an intermediary; popular for its dramatic content, its flowing and generous literary style, its alliteration and graceful imagery, and its expression of divine longing, symbolized by human courtship and love; comparable in this sense, to the biblical, *Song of Songs;* especially loved by Vaishnavites (worshippers of *Vishṇu*), of whom Kṛishṇa was an incarnation; has played a significant part in the development of popular devotional Hinduism.

The songs of the *Gītagovinda* are sung even in present times at religious festivals, in temples and at *kīrtanas* (communal worship in song). With its entirely original arrangement of stanzas and songs, and as the first-known drama concerning Rādhā and Kṛishṇa, the poem has inspired many later imitations. It was much loved and used by Chaitanya, the fourteenth- and

fifteenth-century Bengali Saint. It has also been the inspiration for a style of beautiful and ornate miniature paintings of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Rajasthani and Pahāṛī schools.

The poem was written in Sanskrit by the twelfth-century Jayadeva, a Bengali poet who attended the court of King Lakshmaṇasena (*c.* 1178–1205) at Navadvīpa. Jayadeva was a *brāhmaṇ*, born the son of Bhojadeva, at the village of Kendulī, and was married to Padmavatī. A festival in his honour is held annually at Navadvīpa.

Golden Verses of Pythagoras See **Hieroclēs**.

Gospel of Peter A mid-second-century pseudo-epigraphic Christian writing, the extant portion of which covers the condemnation, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, the latter said to have been witnessed by Roman soldiers and Jewish officials; reflects the view that Jesus' body only had the appearance of reality, and is hence attributed by Serapion, Bishop of Antioch (*c.* 190) to a member of the Docetists (from the Greek *dokein,* 'to seem'); regarded by modern scholars as the work of a Syrian Christian gnostic.

Gospel of Philip A text from the Nag Hammadi codices; a miscellaneous collection, of uncertain date, of aphorisms, short comments, parables, discourses and so on, frequently of a mystical nature and evidently from the Christian tradition. The unknown author states that those who believe in a virgin birth and the resurrection of the dead bodies, either of themselves or of Jesus, are "in error". Philip is the only apostle named in it, and that on only one occasion. The title at the end of the book is presumed to have been derived from this single reference.

Gospel of the Egyptians A text from the Nag Hammadi library, also entitled *The Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit;* tells the familiar gnostic story of creation by the Word, the "self-begotten" emanation of the Father that creates everything, and appears in the physical universe as the Saviour, Jesus – a personification, in the thought of the writer, of the great Saviour, Seth. According to gnostic tradition, the gnostic wisdom of Adam passed to his third son, Seth, who was given to Adam by God to replace the murdered Abel. Subsequently lost for long ages, this wisdom was again revealed to the followers of the Sethian school, in the case of this particular text, by Jesus. The *Gospel of the Egyptians* emphasizes mystic baptism, in particular baptism of the "five seals" in "Living Water" or a "Spring of Truth", both metaphors for the creative Power.

Gospel of the Hebrews The lost gospel of the early Judaeo-Christians, also called the Nazarenes or Nazoraeans; known to some of the early Christian

fathers, including Jerome, who says that it was written in Aramaic, in Hebrew characters, and that he had translated it into Greek and Latin; extant only as fragments cited in the works of others; said to have closely resembled the existing *Gospel of Saint Matthew*, including some sayings of Jesus not present in the canonical gospels; regarded by some of the early Christians as the original version of Matthew's gospel.

Gospel of Thomas A collection of the sayings of Jesus discovered among the Nag Hammadi codices; previously known only from a number of Greek fragments found in the rubbish heaps of ancient Oxyrhynchus in Egypt, and about whose origins scholars had advanced many theories, most of which turned out to be wrong. Like the lost source of Jesus' sayings *('Q')*, used by the compilers of the gospels of both Luke and Matthew, the *Gospel of Thomas* preserves some of the original sayings and parables of Jesus, and dates, presumably, from the first century. The emphasis in this collection of sayings is on finding the kingdom of heaven within oneself.

Gospel of Truth A Christian gnostic treatise from the Nag Hammadi library with affinities to the school of Valentinus, possibly written by Valentinus himself, and thus stemming from the mid-second century. The text is a homily, written with sincere fervour. It concerns the nature of Error, darkness, and the soul's forgetfulness of the Father; the Word of the Father; the coming of Jesus the enlightener and the range of response he receives; the wakefulness and joy of the soul, and its union with the Father arising from the revelation of the "gospel of Truth", the life of the ignorant being likened to a nightmare; and the return of the soul to its divine Source.

Granth Sāhib (Pu) See **Ādi Granth**.

Gregory of Nyssa (*c.*335–395) Born at Caesarea, Cappadocia, in Asia Minor (now Kayseri, in central Turkey), into a distinguished Christian family; younger brother of Basil the Great (329–379), appointed Metropolitan of Cappadocia in 370; a mystically minded scholar, philosopher and theologian; educated in classical philosophy, beginning his adult life as a teacher of rhetoric; turned towards religious studies and devotion in the 360s; unwillingly appointed Bishop of Nyssa by his brother Basil (Bishop of Caesarea) in 372 in a political move to retain ecclesiastical power in Basil's campaign against Arianism, earning his brother's wrath when he failed to provide the expected support; accused of squandering funds, deposed and banished from his diocese in 376 by a synod of Arian bishops who were backed by Valens, the pro-Arian emperor of the eastern Roman Empire; reinstated and enthusiastically welcomed back by his congregation on Valens' death in 378.

With the premature death of Basil in 379, Gregory seems to have emerged from beneath the shadow of his energetic and dominating brother, and to have taken on many of Basil's roles and causes. He plunged into a life of continuous ecclesiastical activity, much of it associated with the struggle between rival theological beliefs. In 381, he played an important part in the Council of Constantinople, called by Emperor Theodosius, in which the theological ideas of Basil and Gregory emerged victorious. Subsequently, he was recognized as one of the leading figures of the Eastern Church, and enjoyed the favour of the emperor.

Gregory's influence peaked during the years 380–385. During this period, his considerable literary output is concerned largely with theological matters. Nevertheless, his underlying inclination towards a scholarly and contemplative life is evident from his refusal of the important bishopric of Sebaste, where he was instrumental in getting his brother Peter appointed in his stead. As the power of the bishops became increasingly restricted to their own dioceses, so Gregory's involvement with wider administrative burdens and heated theological debate lessened. In this latter period, he wrote a number of more spiritually oriented works, including a treatise on Christian asceticism, *De instituto christiano* ('On the Christian Way of Life'); a brilliant mystical commentary on the *Song of Songs;* and a short work, *The Life of Moses,* in which he interprets the journey of Moses and the Hebrews from Egypt to Mount Sinai as an allegory of the soul's progress through the temptations of human life to the vision of God. His mystical and ascetic writings are a skilful blend of both Christian and Greek traditions. He is recorded as attending the annual Council of Constantinople in 394, and must have died soon after, for no more is heard of him.

Gregory Thaumaturgus (*c.*213–270) A Greek, born at Neo-Caesarea, in Asia Minor (now Niksar, in Turkey); a law student, converted to Christianity through association with the mystically minded and Hellenistically influenced Christian teacher, Origen (*c.*185–254), whom he met at Caesarea in Palestine; returned to Neo-Caesarea and devoted his life to Christianizing his mainly pagan home territory; became known as Thaumaturgus (the Wonderworker) because of the miracles attributed to him (including moving a mountain) in his work as a Christian missionary; forced to take temporary refuge in the mountains, along with his community, during the persecution (250–251) of the Roman emperor, Decius (ruled 249–251); introduced church celebrations in honour of the martyrs, on his return.

Gregory seems to have been more a practical shepherd of his community that a writer or theologian. His few extant letters deal with moral issues and the refutation of 'heresies' affecting his community. Nevertheless, his major work, *The Exposition of Faith,* which sets out the basis of belief in the Holy Trinity as well as including instruction to new Christian converts, became

the foundation of the early-fourth-century Nicene Creed (325), the first formal statement of Christian beliefs, held soon after Christianity received official sanction from the Roman Empire. He also wrote a *Panegyric to Origen*, a generous eulogy of his mentor, through whom (he says) he came to appreciate the Greek philosophers and their relevance to Christianity.

Gregory the Great (*c.*540–604) Also known as Gregory I; born in Rome to a wealthy Christian family, son of Gordianus and Sylvia, great-grandson of Felix III (pope, 483–492); appointed to the highest civil administrative office *(praefectus urbis)* in Rome, aged 32, but resigned two years later because of social and political pressures; converted the family palace (part of his paternal inheritance) at Caelian Hill into St Andrew's monastery, using the remainder of his inheritance to found six further monasteries on his lands in Sicily; lived during the Lombard (a Germanic people) invasion of northern Italy, in 568; appointed deacon in Rome by Benedict I (pope, 575–579); sent by Pelagius II (pope, 579–590) as special envoy to Constantinople from 579–584, to secure help for Rome from the emperor, against the Lombards, who were also at war with Byzantium, a largely unfruitful assignment.

Gregory was elected pope in 590, despite his sincere efforts to avoid it, writing in letters that he had been forced into office. Once installed, he determined to use his position for the good of the common people. He imported grain from Sicily and used Church funds to help the poor and the starving, and to alleviate the suffering of refugees from the Lombards, including 3,000 nuns. He overhauled the entire papal administration, criticizing the indolence, indifference, corruption and hypocrisy of the administrators. As he wrote in one of his letters (1:44), "We do not want the treasury of the church defiled by disreputable gain." He was the first pope to seriously address social issues.

Gregory also set about reforming and revitalizing the corrupt Italian Church. He popularized miracles, as well as the idea of purgatory to enable the common people to more effectively relate to their religion. He encouraged a reform of the mass, from which arose the popular Gregorian chant. He sent missionaries to convert the 'uncivilized' and 'heretical' (Arian) Lombards, rather than supporting a war with them. He remonstrated with the Byzantine government over their system of taxation, so harsh that people had to sell their children or emigrate. He bought and sold slaves, and sometimes freed them, admonishing those who treated their slaves badly.

The period was one of Byzantine decline, and Gregory realized that the future of Christianity in the West lay among the migrating peoples of Europe, few of whom were Christian. He opened communications with various powerful European sovereigns, but also approved of subjugating a people by force, where 'appropriate', as in Africa, because it made them more amenable to conversion. He gave financial incentives to Jews who converted.

He also seems to have been politically naive, because he was deceived and manipulated on a number of occasions.

In 596, he established Roman Catholic missions to England, motivated perhaps by the existence of the strong Irish and Scottish monastic movements which were at that time affiliated to the Eastern Church, not Rome, and which he feared could eventually come to dominate England. The first mission consisted of 40 monks, led by Augustine, who subsequently became the first Archbishop of Canterbury.

Gregory was a devout monk, a zealous missionary and an excellent socially minded administrator. It was this mix of qualities that made his papacy the first to be significantly involved in civil affairs, even lobbying governments to adopt particular policies.

His extensive writings and letters are largely practical, containing little originality. His *Regulae pastoralis liber* ('Book of Rules for Pastors') became a handbook for medieval clergy. His *Moralia in Job* ('Morals on the Book of Job') is a textbook on morality and biblical exegesis.

Gulāl Sāhib (*c.*1693–1743) A mystic of Uttar Pradesh; a nobleman of the *kshatriya* (warrior) caste and a disciple of Bullā Sāhib whom he later succeeded; succeeded by his disciple, Bhīkhā Sāhib.

Guru Amardās See **Sikh Gurus**.

Guru Angad See **Sikh Gurus**.

Guru Arjun See **Sikh Gurus**.

Guru Gobind Singh See **Sikh Gurus**.

Guru Nānak See **Sikh Gurus**.

Guru Rāmdās See **Sikh Gurus**.

Guru Tegh Bahādur See **Sikh Gurus**.

Ḥadīth (A) *Lit.* narrative; a body of traditional sayings, deeds and legends concerning Muḥammad; an individual saying or story is also known as a *ḥadīth*.

See also: **The Islamic Way of Life** (1.10).

Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī (A) See **al-Bukhārī**.

Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj (A) See **Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj**.

Ḥāfiẓ (*c.* 1326–90) Full name and title, Khwājah Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Ḥāfiẓ Shīrāzī, a *ḥāfiẓ* (from *ḥāfiẓah,* memory) being one who has learnt the *Qur'ān* by heart; born and died in Shīrāz, in the state of Fārs in Persia; received an orthodox religious education; taught Quranic and Islamic religious studies, writing commentaries on religious texts; appointed court poet of Shīrāz, enjoying the patronage of several rulers, but fell from favour around 1368, not regaining his position until 20 years later, shortly before his death.

Ḥāfiẓ is regarded as one of the finest of the Persian Sufi poets, whose *ghazals* on divine love revitalized the *ghazal* as a poetic genre. A *ghazal* is a form of lyric and symbolic poem of 6 to 15 couplets, focused on one theme, but not necessarily following any connecting sequence of thought. It is a pastiche of images, as it were, comparable to the beads on a necklace or to the elements of an impressionist painting. His poetry has remained popular in all Persian-speaking countries, its appeal lying in his simple, colloquial and yet musical language, his use of everyday images and proverbs, his love of humanity, his exposure of hypocrisy, and his capacity to relate his essentially mystical themes to everyday life. The author of some prose, Ḥāfiẓ is remembered largely for his *Dīvān,* or collected works of poetry.

Ḥallāj, Manṣūr al- (*c.*857–922) Full name and title, Abū al-Mughīth al-Ḥusayn ibn Manṣūr Maḥammá al-Bayḍāwī; commonly known as al-Ḥallāj (the wool carder: one who combs, cleans and prepares wool for spinning) or Ḥallāj al-Asrār (carder of the heart); known in India as Manṣūr; sometimes referred to by the epithet, *al-'Ārif* (the gnostic); born in Ṭūs in the province of Fārs, in Iran; moved at an early age to Wāsiṭ, in Iraq, an Arab textile and trading centre, where his father may have worked as a wool carder. His grandfather is traditionally believed to have been a Zoroastrian, descended from one of the companions of Muḥammad, and his father was a Muslim convert.

Attracted to Sufism at an early age, he received his first instruction in the spiritual life from Sahl ibn 'Abd al-Allāh al-Tustarī, who lived a quiet life in the city of Tustar in Khūzistān. Before he was 20, he moved to Baṣrah, where he became a disciple of 'Amr ibn 'Uthmān al-Makkī. During this period, he married the daughter of the Sufi, 'Abū Ya'qūb al-Aqta'. Later, moving to Baghdad, he received further guidance from Abū al-Qāsim al-Junayd, with whom al-Makkī had previously received instruction. However, his relationship with both al-Makkī and Junayd is said to have been broken off, and some authorities say that Junayd refused to accept al-Ḥallāj as a disciple.

From 895, al-Ḥallāj began to travel widely, teaching and writing. He undertook a pilgrimage to Mecca, where he lived for a year, following a strict spiritual discipline. Leaving Mecca, he journeyed through Fārs, Khūzistān, Khurāsān and other regions, teaching the way to an intimate relationship with God, and attracting a large following. After a second pilgrimage to

Mecca, he returned to his family in Baghdad, before leaving on a tour of India and Turkestan, regions not yet penetrated by Islam. After a third pilgrimage to Mecca, he returning to Baghdad around 908.

Al-Ḥallāj has been categorized as an 'intoxicated', rather than a 'sober', Sufi. He also taught at a time of social, political and religious unrest. The Sufi movement had yet to be integrated with orthodox Islamic theology, philosophy and religious law, and was regarded with some suspicion by the authorities. Moreover, his travels and his desire to share his mystical experience with others was not always appreciated by other Sufis, and he was probably misunderstood by the central government to be harbouring hidden political intentions and a desire to undermine their authority.

Whatever the background, when it was reported that al-Ḥallāj had said to al-Shiblī in the mosque of *al-Manṣūr* in Baghdad – "*Anā al-Ḥaqq* (I am God)." – he was arrested (near Sūs, in 913) on a charge of heresy, the claim of divinity being heretical in the eyes of most Muslims. The case against him was by no means clear, however, and the court proceedings were marked by uncertainty. After a long imprisonment in Baghdad, he was eventually crucified and tortured to death in 922, before a large crowd. It is said that he met his death with equanimity, uttering words of forgiveness to his persecutors. Leaving behind his followers, his writings and the memory of his horrific martyrdom, al-Ḥallāj has become a significant episode in Islamic history, and one of the most widely discussed figures in the history of Sufism.

Hamadānī, 'Ayn al-Quḍāt al- (1098–1131) *Lit.* cynosure of the judges of Hamadān; real name, Abū al-Ma'ālī 'Abd Allāh ibn Abī Bakr Muḥammad ibn 'Alī ibn al-Ḥasan ibn al-Miyānjī; believed to have been from Azerbaijan; studied the path of the Sufis from an early age; a formidable intellectual of his time, he studied the writings of al-Ghazālī and is also believed to have reached great spiritual heights; attracted a sizable following and charges of heresy were brought by the orthodox; executed in Hamadān at an early age.

Hamadānī, Bābā Ṭāhir (*d.c.*1055) Probably born in Hamadān in Iran, though also associated with Luristān, but of whom little else is known; one of the most revered Sufi poets of early Persian literature, around whom has developed a wealth of legends and miracles, often conflicting; nicknamed 'Uryān (the Naked), suggesting that he was an ascetic or dervish.

Bābā Ṭāhir is traditionally believed to have been an illiterate woodcutter who attended lectures at a nearby *madrasah* (religious college), where he was ridiculed by his fellow students for his lack of education. According to the story, when he asked them to show him how to acquire knowledge, they told him to pass a winter's night in a tank of icy water. Unaware that it was a joke, Bābā Ṭāhir carried out the advice. In the morning he found that he was enlightened, exclaiming, "Last night I was a Kurd and this morning, an

Arab" a statement also credited to at least two other Sufis. His erstwhile teachers and classmates were, of course, suitably impressed with his new-found wisdom.

Bābā Ṭāhir's exact dates are uncertain. However, it is reported that when the conquering Saljūq Sulṭān Tuqril entered Hamadān in 1055, the poet admonished him, saying, "O Turk, how are you going to behave towards the Muslims?", by which the *sulṭān* was greatly impressed. It is therefore possible that Bābā Ṭāhir died sometime after 1055. He is still revered in Iran, where he is remembered by a magnificent mausoleum in Hamadān.

Bābā Ṭāhir wrote verse in a Persian dialect, with a local flavour, expressing a deep spirituality in lyrical yet simple language. He is the author of a number of mystical treatises, and commentaries also exist on a collection of his maxims on such subjects as knowledge *('ilm), gnosis (ma'rifah),* reason and the soul *('aql, nafs),* this world and the next *(dunyā, 'uqbá),* remembrance *(ẕikr),* and so on. His poetic works have been translated into English by E. Heron-Allen (*The Laments of Baba Tahir,* 1902), A.J. Arberry (*Poems of a Persian Sufi,* 1937) and Mehdi Nakhosteen (*The Rubáiyyát of Bábá Táhir Oryán,* 1967).

Haṃsa Upanishad (S) *Lit.* the *Upanishad* of the *haṃsa* (swan), the *haṃsa* being a Vedic symbol for the soul; belonging to the *Yajur Veda;* expounds the idea that the *haṃsa* becomes the *Paramahaṃsa* (supreme Soul, God) through meditation on the sound of *Om,* especially on its reverberations; describes the various inner sounds heard by the practitioner, advocating *kuṇḍalinī yoga* as the means of experiencing them.

See also: **Upanishads**.

Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā (S) A basic text on *haṭha yoga,* written by Svātmārāma Yogī, probably during the fifteenth century CE; a manual of *haṭha yoga,* understood as a preparation for *rāja yoga;* deals with *āsanas* (postures), *mudrās* (gestures), *kumbhaka* (breath control), *prāṇa* (life energy), *prāṇāyāma* (control of the *prāṇa*), the *chakras* (centres), *nāḍīs* (channels of *prāṇa*), *kuṇḍalinī, Nāda* (Sound), the discipline and life of a yogi, and so on.

Ḥayyim Vital (1542–1620) Born in Safed, Palestine; died in Damascus; a disciple, first of Moses Cordovero, and then – after Cordovero's death in 1570 – of Isaac Luria (1534–72), who had recently arrived in Safed; the main proponent of Luria's teachings, and author of *Sefer 'Ez Ḥayyim* ('Book of the Tree of Life'), an exposition of Luria's doctrines, published 20 years after Luria's death; leader of Palestinian Kabbalism, serving as rabbi and head of a *yeshiva* (school of advanced learning) in Jerusalem (1577–85).

See also: **Isaac Luria**, **Sefer 'Eẓ Ḥayyim**.

Hebrews, Epistle to the A New Testament text whose authorship has been debated from the earliest times; written from Italy (if the farewells are deemed a part of the original letter) to uncertain recipient(s); attributed to Paul, but written in a very different language and style to Paul's letters; generally rejected as one of Paul's letters by the Western Church, up to the fourth century, and accepted by the Eastern Church only with many reservations; accepted by Clement of Alexandria (*c.*150–215) who suggested that Paul had written the letter in Hebrew, and Luke had translated it into Greek; rejected, however, by Clement's successor Origen (*c.*185–254) on grounds of its style and content, commenting, "Who wrote the epistle, God knows"; included as the fourteenth letter of Paul when the canons of the Eastern and Western Churches were amalgamated in 367; dated to before *c.*96, when it is mentioned in the *First Letter of Clement,* internal evidence suggesting a date after the persecution of Nero (*i.e.* after 64) and around the time of the Emperor Domitian's persecution of the mid–90s.

The apt title, 'To the Hebrews', dates from the second century. More a sermon than a letter, the content presumes an audience familiar with the Old Testament. It is also the first example of metaphorical and allegorical interpretation of the Old Testament in a Christian setting. The flight of the children of Israel through the desert, for example, is used to depict the Christians passing through difficult times. Christ is portrayed as the perfect and eternal high priest, ruler of all, higher than the angels, the mediator between man and God in a new covenant, sealed with his blood, cancelling the sins caused by infringement of the earlier covenant (chaps. 1–9). A repetitive theme of the letter is the "Word of God" by which "the worlds were framed" (11:3). The world was made by God through the "Son" by the "Word of His Power" (1:2–3). The writer also echoes descriptions of the divine Wisdom in the *Wisdom of Solomon* (7:22–24), when he describes the "Word of God" as "quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, ... a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (4:12, *KJV*). When advising brotherly love, *Hebrews* is a conveyer of the touching tradition that by being good to strangers, "Some people have entertained angels, unawares" (13:1, *KJV*).

Hegesippus Late-second-century Greek Christian; a writer and opponent of gnostic Christianity; known for his five books of memoirs of the early Church, partially preserved in *Ecclesiastical History,* a history of the Church down to 324 by Eusebius of Caesarea.

Hegesippus' work is the primary extant source on early Christian history. It contains both historical and doctrinal material, including the names of the Roman bishops and their doctrines, as far as Pope Eleutherius (174–89). Hegesippus also pays considerable attention to the Judaeo-Christians in Jerusalem, especially their fate in the Jewish persecution following the

Roman occupation of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE. He writes that splinter groups began to form after the martyrdom of James the brother of Jesus (*c.*62 CE).

Henry Crow Dog (1899–1985) A twentieth-century Lakota (Sioux) Native American medicine man; the son of John Crow Dog and Jumping Elk, and the father of Leonard Crow Dog.

See **Some Recent Native Americans** (1.14).

Henry Suso (*c.*1295–1366) Original name, Heinrich von Berg; born to a noble family, probably in Constance, Swabia, in southwest Germany; according to his own description, the son of a worldly man and a pious mother; adopted his mother's name in her memory; because of frail health and before the prescribed age of 15, was secured admission to the Dominican friary in Constance by means of a bribe, something which later troubled his conscience; lived as a recluse, practising severe austerities and mortification of the flesh, experiencing both heavenly bliss and periods of doubt and despair; relates that his fellow friars were frivolous and unfriendly, regarding him as a crazy eccentric; later, receiving what he felt to be a divine command, he threw his instruments of self-torture into the river; studied in Cologne with the mystic Meister Eckhart (*c.*1260–1327), returning to Constance to teach, around 1326.

In 1327 or thereabouts, Suso wrote *The Little Book of Truth* in defence of Eckhart who had been put on trial for his views. Around 1328, he wrote *The Little Book of Eternal Wisdom,* a simple, down-to-earth treatise, which became one of the most widely read Christian works. He is also author of the autobiographical, *The Life of the Servant,* never intended for publication, but written to help a friend

Sometime around 1327–30, he lost his teaching post in Constance for his defence of Eckhart, who had been condemned by the Pope (1329). In fact, throughout his life, Suso was subjected to persecution and calumny. Nevertheless, he became well known as a preacher, especially in Switzerland and the upper Rhine, and was appointed prior to the Friends of God (a German mystical movement) in Constance (1343–44). Subsequently, he was exiled to Diessenhofen, Switzerland by the German king, Louis IV, moving to Ulm in southern Germany around 1347, where he died in 1366. Suso was beatified by Pope Gregory XVI in 1831.

Heraclitus (*c.*535–475 BCE) A late-sixth-century (BCE) philosopher of Ephesus, a Greek trading city on the west coast of Asia Minor; known only from pithy fragments quoted in the writings of others, in which he speaks of the *Logos* in the manner of a mystic.

See also: **Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans** (1.9).

Hermetic Literature A body of Greek and Latin texts ascribed to Hermēs Trismegistus and his disciples.

See **Hermetic Literature** (1.9).

Herodotus (*c*.485–425 BCE) A Greek historian, born in Halicarnassus, a Greek city in southwest Asia Minor, then under Persian rule; remembered for his *History of the Graeco-Persian Wars,* the first great history in anything approaching the modern 'factual' style; sometimes described as the father of modern history; travelled widely for many years, visiting much of the Persian Empire, as well as Egypt, Libya, Syria, Babylonia, Elam, Lydia, Phrygia, Byzantium, Thrace, Macedonia, northward over the Danube, eastward to Scythia and along the northern coast of the Black Sea as far as the River Don; believed to have lived for some time in Athens, where he met Sophoclēs, and in Thurii, a Greek colony in southern Italy. The latest event mentioned in his *History* is dated to 430 BCE, and it is believed that his work was published in Greece before his death.

Hesiod An eighth-century (BCE) Greek epic poet, often described as the father of Greek didactic verse; born in Boetia, in central Greece, to which his father had emigrated from Cymē in Asia Minor; lived in Ascra, near Mount Helicon; claims to have received his poetic gifts from the Muses, who appeared to him while he was watching his sheep, giving him the poet's staff and a poet's voice, and instructing him to "sing of the race of the blessed gods immortal". Hesiod seems to have gained some renown in his own time, being invited to participate in a song contest at the funeral games of Amphidamas at Chalcis on the island of Euboea, the only time, he recalls, when he took to the sea.

Only two of his epics have survived: *Theogony* and *Works and Days. Theogony* concerns the origin of the world and the history of the gods. Containing many folk tales and much mythology, it is one of the richest sources of descriptions of the Greek gods. *Works and Days* is addressed to his brother Persēs. Persēs, it seems, has already schemed his way by dishonest means into more than his fair share of their joint inheritance, and is intent on going further. Hesiod points out to him the necessity of honest toil, asserting his belief in Justice as a deity, the favourite daughter of Zeus. Human happiness, he affirms, depends on good treatment of her. The second part of *Works and Days* deals with peasant life and the agricultural seasons, and is enlivened by a deep awareness of the rhythm of the changing seasons and their affect on man.

Hieroclēs (*b.c.*430 CE) A Pythagorean philosopher, born at Hillarima in Caria, an ancient region on the Aegean Sea, in southwest Asia Minor, corresponding to the Turkish districts of south Aydin and west Mugla; after studying philosophy in Athens and visiting Constantinople, he settled in Alexandria, where he gained a reputation as a teacher of philosophy; supposed to have once been a wrestler who relinquished the gymnasium to become a philosopher; author of a number of works on providence, fate, human free will and divine government, morality, justice, and so on, of which only his commentary on the *Golden Verses* (Gk. *Chrysa Epē, lit.* golden words; 71 hexameters attributed to Pythagoras) has survived; not to be confused with a first- or second-century (CE) Stoic of the same name, also from Alexandria.

Hilālī, Badr al-Dīn (*d.*1530) A late-fifteenth- and early-sixteenth-century Persian poet, of Turkish origin, born in Astarābād; author of a *Dīvān* (collected poems) consisting mainly of *ghazals* (lyric poems) and three *maśnavīs* (poems in rhymed couplets); although known as a *Sunnī,* he was executed in 1530 as a *Shī'ah* heretic.

Hippolytus (*c.*170–236) Bishop of Rome during the papacy of Zephyrinus (pope, *c.*199–217); believed that the Godhead is a Trinity of three 'persons' indivisible yet distinguishable, contrary to Zephyrinus whom he condemns as favouring the teaching that the Father and Son are different designations of the same one God (Modalistic Monarchianism). Hippolytus describes Zephyrinus in his *Refutation of All Heresies* (IX:6) as an "ignorant and illiterate individual, unskilled in ecclesiastical affairs", going on to claim that he was subject to the scheming influence of Calixtus, who held a similar viewpoint on the Trinity.

Zephyrinus appointed Calixtus (pope, *c.*217–222) as his papal successor. When Calixtus extended the Church's absolution to grave sins such as sexual immorality (previously believed forgivable only by God), Hippolytus – already at boiling point – was so incensed that he withdrew from the Roman community to lead a schismatic group, and was consecrated as pope. Hippolytus was thus the first antipope, remaining in opposition to Calixtus, Urban I (pope, *c.*222–230) and Pontian (pope, *c.*230–236).

Hippolytus is largely remembered for his *Refutation of All Heresies* (written in Greek), a biased, often inaccurate, defamatory and probably libellous harangue against all he perceived as 'heretics', Christian or otherwise. Included as objects of his ire are Greek philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle and many others. The book's chief value in present times is the information that can be gleaned from it regarding the various groups of early Christians, especially those of gnostic persuasion.

Hippolytus and Pope Pontian were both sent to the Sardinian mines in 235, during the persecution of Christians by the Roman emperor, Maximinus (ruled 235–238). There, before being martyred, the two were reconciled, jointly appointing a successor, Anterus (pope, *c.*235–236), recommending their followers to support him, thus ending the schism. Their bodies were brought to Rome for burial by Fabian (pope, 236–250).

History of Philip Also called the *Acts of Philip;* one of the later apocryphal *Acts*, of uncertain date, purporting to recount the deeds (often miraculous) of Philip, the Greek-speaking disciple of Jesus (*John* 12:20–21), on various missionary journeys to Greece and other Mediterranean countries; said to have originally consisted of 15 distinct 'acts', together with the *Martyrdom of Philip,* of which numbers 10 to 14 are missing from the existing Greek text, and only one is extant in Syriac.

Homer An eighth- or ninth-century (BCE) Greek poet, traditionally believed by the ancient Greeks to have written the two great epic poems of ancient Greece, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey;* an elusive figure, about whom practically nothing is known, except that he was perhaps born on the island of Chios, and was blind.

To the ancient Greeks, these two epics, with a cast of scheming gods, heroic men and beautiful women, were valued as more than mere stories. They epitomized the Greek ideals of heroism and unity, and were a source of instruction – moral and practical, forming the basis of education and culture in the classical world until the spread of Christianity. The *Iliad* describes the Trojan War between the Greeks and the Trojans, which began with the abduction of Helen, wife of King Menelaus of Sparta by Paris, prince of Troy. The *Odyssey* tells the story of the 10-year homeward journey of the wily, courageous and ever resourceful Odysseus, after the fall of Troy. The *Odyssey* has also been interpreted allegorically as the homeward journey of the soul, beset by the trials and attractions of material existence.

See also: **gods (Greek)** (4.2).

Hosea The biblical book of the eighth-century (BCE) Hosea; the first of the so-called minor prophets; a comparatively short book of considerable significance, focusing on the corruption of the people of Israel through their abandonment of the true worship of God, and their pursuit of foreign deities with their related degenerate rites and ceremonies; traces the Israelites' loss of moral foundation as a result of their disloyalty to God and His covenant; also predicts the doom and destruction that the Israelites will experience as punishment for their behaviour, and the eventual purification, repentance and divine forgiveness that the punishment will foster.

Huà Hú Chīng (Huà Hú Jīng) (C) *Lit.* classic *(chīng)* on conversion *(huà)* of barbarians *(hú)*: written about 300 CE; of unknown provenance, believed by some Taoists to have been authored by Lăo Tzu; consists of an elaboration of the *Tào Té Chīng*, and similarly organized into 81 poems or chapters.

Huái Nán Tzu (Huái Nán Zi) (C) Also called the *Book of Huái Nán Tzu*; a Taoist work dating from the second century BCE, written by a group of scholars commissioned by Líu Ān, the prince of Huái Nán; believed to have originally been a compilation of the many philosophies of that era, with a central theme of Taoism, although only the chapters on Taoism have survived. Several of the surviving Taoist chapters discuss the creation of the cosmos, which other Taoist texts *(Tào Té Chīng, Chuāng Tzu* and *Lièh Tzu)* do not.

Hujwīrī, Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn 'Uthmān ibn 'Alī al-Ghaznawī al-Jullābī al- (*d.c.*1077) A Persian Sufi, born at Hujwīr, a suburb of Ghazna, in Afghanistan; known in India as *Dātā Ganj Bakhsh* (*lit.* giver of treasure); studied Sufism under Abū al-Faḍl Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan Khattlī; travelled widely from Syria to Turkestan, and from the Indus to the Caspian Sea, including Azerbaijan, Damascus, Ṭūs, Bisṭām and Samarkand; met many Sufis and *Shaykhs* during his wanderings; settled for some time in Iraq, where he ran deeply into debt, and had a short and unhappy married life. According to Riyāḍ al-Awliyā', he finally settled at Lahore (now in Pakistan), where he was imprisoned for some time. He died sometime between 1072 and 1077 in Lahore, where an impressive shrine and mosque built over his tomb is now a place of pilgrimage.

A *Sunnī* and an adherent of the *Ḥanafī* school of Islamic law, al-Hujwīrī, like many other Sufis, managed to reconcile Islamic theology with an advanced mysticism in which *fanā'* (extinction of the individual self) held a dominant place. He compares *fanā'* to burning by fire, which transmutes the quality of all things to its own quality, leaving their essence unchanged.

Al-Hujwīrī is remembered for his famous treatise on Sufism, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb li-Arbāb al-Qulūb* ('Unveiling of the Hidden for the People of the Heart'), intended as a complete presentation of Sufism, setting out and discussing its doctrines and practices in reply to certain questions addressed to him by his fellow countryman, Abū Sa'īd al-Hujwīrī. It was written in Lahore, with some difficulty owing to the loss of books which he had left at Ghazna.

Hypostasis of the Archons A gnostic text from the Nag Hammadi library, possibly dating from the third century, partially set as a revelation dialogue between an angel and an inquirer; sets out to interpret Paul's references to the "authorities of the darkness" (*Colossians* 1:13) and the "spirits of wickedness"

(*Ephesians* 6:12) as the human struggle for *gnosis* against the authorities *(eksousiai)* and rulers *(archons)* ruling creation; contains a gnostic interpretation of the *Genesis* creation myths.

Iamblichus (*c*.250–330 CE) A Syrian Neo-Platonist, founder of the Syrian branch of Neo-Platonism; a pupil of Porphyry; played a significant role in the evolution of the mystical teachings of Plotinus into the complex pagan mystical religion known from the works of the fifth-century Proclus; developed a philosophy that included rites and myths associated with the pagan gods, and magical practices intended to invoke the help of the gods (theurgy) in human spiritual development; a prolific writer (in Greek), much of whose work has been lost; author of *On the Mysteries, On the Life of Pythagoras, Exhortation to Philosophy, On the General Science of Mathematics, On the Arithmetic of Nicomachus,* and *Theological Principles of Arithmetic.*

Ibn al-'Arabī, Muḥyī al-Dīn Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn 'Alī ibn Muḥammad al-'Arabī al-Ḥātim al-Ṭā'ī (1165–1240) Born in Murcia in southeastern Spain into an ancient Arab family, his father being of some social standing, numbering the philosopher Ibn Rushd (Averroës) among his friends; moved to Seville when he was eight, where he began his formal education; studied later at Ceuta in North Africa; a mystic, teacher and one of the greatest metaphysical thinkers of Islam; also known as *al-Shaykh al-Akbar* (the greatest Shaykh). From his home in Seville, Ibn al-'Arabī travelled extensively in North Africa, seeking out Sufis of spiritual development. He speaks of many *shaykhs* among his teachers, including Abū Ja'far al-'Uraynī, Abū Ya'qūb al-Qaysī (a disciple of Abū Madyan), and others, including two women. His close relatives also included a number of Sufi adepts.

In 1198, while in Murcia, he had a vision in which he felt impelled to leave Spain and travel to the East, a journey from which he never returned to his homeland. Travelling first to Mecca (1201), he received a vision in which he was instructed to begin his great work, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyah* ('Meccan Revelations'), completed many years later in Damascus. It is a vast work, a monumental exposition of Sufi doctrine, together with insights into his own inner life.

From Mecca, he travelled to Egypt, in the same year, and thence to Anatolia, where in Konya, he met Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī, who became his disciple, and later his successor in the East. By the time his long journey reached its end in Damascus, in 1223, he was known all over the Islamic world. The remainder of his life was spent in Damascus, in meditation, teaching and writing. During this time, he completed *al-Futūḥāt,* and in 1229, 10 years before his death, he wrote one of his most significant works, *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* (*Bezels of Wisdom,* a bezel being a cutting edge), a much

smaller book concerning the nature of the mystics, and an expression of Ibn al-'Arabī's mature thought.

A prolific author and perhaps the most philosophical of all the great Sufi writers, his other works included *Tarjumān al-Ashwāq* ('Interpreter of Yearnings'), a book of devotional poetry; and *Rūḥ al-Quds* ('Spirit of Holiness') and *al-Durrat al-Fākhirah* ('Precious Pearl'), which contain biographies of Andalusian and a few other Sufis.

Ibn al-'Arabī became a link between the Western Sufis of Spain and Morocco, and those of Egypt and Syria. Through his disciple, Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī, he influenced Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī and the later Persian mystics. 'Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī, al-Shādhilī and others all used and developed his terminology and mode of expression. His tomb in Damascus, below Mount Qāsiyūn, was regarded as a part of the gardens of paradise, and was called al-Kibrīt al-Aḥmar (*lit.* red sulphur, philosopher's stone).

Ibn al-'Arabī, often abbreviated to Ibn 'Arabī, should not be confused with Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Ma'āfirī ibn al-'Arabī, a traditionalist of Seville (1076–1148), or Muḥammad ibn Ziyād Abū 'Abd Allāh ibn al-'Arabī, a philologist of the school of Kūfah.

Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh, Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad (*d.*1309) Born in mid-thirteenth-century Alexandria to a scholarly Malikite family of strong religious traditions; demonstrated an excellence in Islamic studies from an early age. Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh's father was a disciple of al-Shādhilī (*d.*1258), founder of the *Shādhilī* order of Sufis (who believed in following a spiritual life while still living in the world), and would also have known al-Shādhilī's successor, Abū al-'Abbās al-Mursī. As a young man, however, Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh believed only in the letter of the Islamic religious law. He was opposed to Sufism, and hostile to Abū al-'Abbās al-Mursī. Nevertheless, in 1276, he attended one of the *Shaykh*'s public discourses, and was relieved to discover that Sufism and Islamic religious law were not in opposition. Impressed with the *Shaykh,* he immediately became one of al-Mursī's most promising disciples. By the time of the *Shaykh*'s death, 12 years later, Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh was himself a *Shaykh,* teaching in Cairo, and had written his best-known book, *Kitāb al-Ḥikam* ('Book of Wisdom'), for which he received his Master's approval. The book – written in rhythmical, dignified Arabic – has remained popular among both Sufis and pious Muslims, many of whom have committed its aphorisms to memory. A *Shaykh* of powerful presence, his funeral procession was described as vast, and his tomb is still a place of pilgrimage.

Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh was the first *Shaykh* of the *Shādhilī* order to put their teachings into book form. Though not prolific, his works have endured. They include *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ wa-Miṣbāḥ al-Arwāḥ* ('Key of Success and the Lamp of the Spirits'), *al-Tanwīr fī Isqāṭ al-Tadbīr* ('Light on the Elimination of Self-Direction') on the *Shādhilī*'s teaching concerning morality

and ethics, and *Laṭā'if al-minan fī Manāqib al-Shaykh Abū al-'Abbās wa-Shaykhihi Abū al-Ḥasan* ('Subtleties concerning the Virtues of Abū al-'Abbās and his Master Abū al-Ḥasan'), which concerns the first *Shaykhs* in the *Shādhilī* line.

Ibn Mājah, Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Yazīd al-Raba'ī al-Qazwīnī (824–887) Born and lived in Qazwīn; author of *Kitāb al-Sunan* ('Book of Traditions'), which contains 4,000 *ḥadīth,* the last of the six canonical collections; travelled widely in Iraq, Syria, Hījjāj and Egypt in search of *ḥadīth,* drawing material from many sources.

See also: **The Islamic Way of Life** (1.10).

Ibn Sīnā, Abū 'Alī al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Abd Allāh (980–1037) Commonly anglicized as Avicenna; an ethnic Persian, born near Bukhārā in Iran (now in Uzbekistan); regarded as the most renowned physician and philosopher-scientist of the Islamic world; a precocious child who had memorized the *Qur'ān* and a great deal of Arabic poetry by the age of 10; educated at home by his father, who entertained many of the greatest thinkers of the time; studied logic and metaphysics with various teachers, whom he soon outstripped, continuing with his own personal studies of Islamic law and medicine; gained access to the extensive royal library of the Samanids (the first Iranian dynasty following the Muslim Arab conquest) after curing the prince, Nuḥ ibn Manṣūr, of a severe illness; was accomplished in all branches of learning while still a young man, and was widely acclaimed as a physician; also spent some time as a government administrator.

In 999, Ibn Sīnā's life changed radically. His father died, the Samanid dynasty fell to the Turkish leader, Maḥmūd of Ghazna (in Afghanistan), and Ibn Sīnā began a period of wandering in tumultuous political times, which lasted more or less for the remainder of his life. First, he travelled through the various cities of Khurāsān, in northeastern Iran, then on to Rayy (near modern Tehran) and Qazwīn, and thence to Hamadān, in west-central Iran. Here, he was appointed court physician, and twice held the post of vizier. He also became embroiled in political intrigues, went into hiding for some time, and was even imprisoned. The last 14 years of his life were passed as scientific adviser and physician to the ruler of Iṣfahān, 'Alā' al-Dawlah. He died of colic and exhaustion while accompanying al-Dawlah on a military campaign.

Throughout his life, Ibn Sīnā maintained his intellectual focus, and continued his writing, often earning his living as a physician during the day, while writing and teaching at night. His most substantial work was done during this period, including his best-known work, *Kitāb al-Shifā'* ('Book of Healing'), a philosophical and scientific *tour-de-force,* covering logic,

psychology, geometry, astronomy, arithmetic, medicine, music and metaphysics. The philosophy of this book owes much to the Greek philosophers, especially, Aristotle and the Neo-Platonists. He regarded God as the one true Existent, denying personal immortality, God's interest in the individual, and the creation of the world at a point in time. Everything, he argued, is the eternal expression or emanation of the Divine. Many of his views were contrary to orthodox Islamic thought, and although they were later countered by the philosopher and mystic, al-Ghazālī (1058–1111), Ibn Sīnā's philosophy remained influential throughout the Middle Ages.

His work on medicine, *Qānūn fī al-Ṭibb* ('The Canon of Medicine'), is the single most significant book in the history of medicine, and was long pre-eminent as a primary textbook in the Middle East and Europe. It draws largely upon the work of Greek physicians in Roman times, together with his own experiences. It was translated into Latin in the twelfth century, a Hebrew translation appeared in 1491, and an Arabic version in 1593, the second text ever printed in Arabic.

During his latter years in Iṣfahān, he completed these two major works, composed more than 200 treatises, and wrote several other books. In his last major philosophical work, *Kitāb al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbīhāt* ('Book of Directives and Remarks'), he reveals much of his own personal beliefs, describing the journey of the mystic from the first stirrings of faith to the ultimate vision of the Divine.

Ibrāhīm ibn Adham, Abū Isḥāq (*c.*730–780) One of the well-known early Sufis, sometimes described as the first Sufi; of Arabian descent, said to have been born a prince of Balkh in Khurāsān, in northeastern Iran; renounced his kingdom and, shortly after adopting Sufism, emigrated to Syria where he worked as a rural labourer until his death; mentioned in 'Aṭṭār's *Tadhkirat al-Awliyā'* ('Memoirs of the Saints').

Numerous stories and many sayings have been attributed to Ibrāhīm ibn Adham. In his early search, he is said to have adopted a Christian monk as his teacher. He said, "My first teacher in *ma'rifah (gnosis)* was a monk named Simeon." According to an Indian legend, Kabīr (*c.*1398–1518) only accepted him as a disciple after 12 years of menial work, something which is historically impossible, their dates being adrift by several centuries. He is said to have been killed in the war against Byzantium.

Ì Chīng (Yi Jīng) (C) *Lit.* classic *(chīng)* of change *(ì);* sometimes translated (inexactly) as the *Book of Changes;* a form of divination believed to have been handed down verbally for many centuries, and put into written form around the twelfth century BCE by the Emperor Wén Wáng of the Chōu dynasty; a famous oracle based on the fundamental Chinese principle of duality *(yīn* and *yáng),* with the idea that the interaction of these two princi-

ples brings about all change and creation in the universe. Therefore, through a combinations of dual symbols in the form of eight trigrams consisting of broken and unbroken lines, representing combinations of aspects of *yīn* and *yáng*, it is believed that the tendencies and transformations of any object or situation can be divined. Over the centuries commentaries have been added to the *Ì Chīng;* the work has been included in the classics of both Confucianism and Taoism, and is regarded as a bridge between the two philosophical systems.

Ignatius (*d.c.*110) Full name, Ignatius Theophorus (*lit.* God-bearer); Bishop of Antioch (in Syria), known almost entirely from seven letters written during his journey to Rome as a prisoner, condemned to face wild beasts in the Roman arena; influenced in his thinking by St Paul and the tradition associated with St John. His letters contain a warning against what he perceives as 'false' teachings, especially of those Christians who did not accept the authority of the New Testament, and the Docetists (from the Greek *dokein*, 'to seem'), who believed that the sufferings of Jesus had been apparent, not real. Ignatius insists on the real humanity and suffering of Christ, from which he and countless other early Christians drew their ardent desire for martyrdom. He also advocated a hierarchical structure of the Church, with episcopal authority. Though nothing is known of him prior to his arrest, his letters are often cited as a source of information of the early Church in transition from its Jewish origins to assimilation into the Graeco-Roman world. They also reflect the spread of opinion among early Christian groups.

Inanna's Descent A complex Sumerian myth concerning the descent of the goddess Inanna (Lady of the Date Clusters) to the underworld. Inanna (Akkadian, Ishtar) conceives the desire to rule the underworld after deposing her sister Ereshkigal (Lady of the Greater Earth). However, her attempt fails, she loses her life, and is turned to a piece of rotting meat in the underworld. Through the ingenuity of Enki (Lord of Sweet Waters), she is finally brought back to life provided she supplies a substitute. On her return, she finds her young husband, Damuzi (Akkadian, Tammuz), enjoying himself, not missing her at all. In a fit of jealousy, she designates him as her substitute. Damuzi flees, is caught, escapes again, and so on, until finally he is taken to the underworld. Meanwhile, his little sister, Geshtinanna, is told by a fly where he has gone, and she goes in search of him. The story ends with Inanna decreeing that Damuzi and Geshtinanna should each spend half their time in the underworld, as her substitutes.

See also: **Sumerian and Mesopotamian Spirituality** (1.3), **Tammuz Liturgies**.

'Ināyat Khān, Ḥażrat (1882–1927) A musician, composer, *vīṇa* player and singer, the first Indian musician to bring Indian classical music to the West; also a teacher of Sufi mystical philosophy; born and raised in Baroda, in Gujarat, India, in the house of his grandfather, Mawlā Bakhsh, a well-known musician (from a long line of musicians). Mawlā Bakhsh was also a Sufi, and his house was a meeting point for an exchange of ideas on a wide range of belief systems, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, and so on. In this environment, 'Ināyat Khān learnt sympathy and tolerance for others, realizing that there are common threads in all religions. He developed a particular love of the *Bhagavad Gītā*.

'Ināyat Khān studied music and learnt to play the *vīṇa*. He especially enjoyed the poetry and songs of Indian mystics such as Kabīr, Guru Nānak, Guru Rāmdās, Dādū, Sundardās, Tukārām and Dayānanda Sarasvatī, also composing his own songs. At 18, he began touring India, teaching, lecturing and giving concerts.

In 1903, he met his *Murshid* (Master), Sayyid Muḥammad Abū Ḥāshim Madanī, in Hyderabad in 1903, where he lived until his Master's death in 1907. Subsequently, for three years, he wandered throughout India, Sri Lanka and Burma, giving concerts and lectures on his music. His Master's last instructions were to harmonize East and West through the harmony of his music; to spread the wisdom of Sufism abroad, for "God has given you great gifts." Accordingly, in 1910, he travelled to the West, accompanied by his brothers, who were also musicians, where they gave concerts and lectured, in America and Europe, meeting many prominent artists of the time.

Before the First World War (1914–18), he and his brothers lived in Paris, passing the war years in London. In London, he founded the Sufi Order (1910) and the Sufi Movement (1916), and in Geneva, the International Sufi Movement (1922). From 1920 to 1926, he toured Europe and America, founding centres in 12 countries, and initiating a large number of disciples. He met with fame and admiration, but also misunderstanding and resistance.

He was married three times; his first wife died within a few days and the second within a year. The third was an American, Ora May Baker (a relative of Mrs Eddy Baker, the developer of Christian Science), whom he married in London, in 1912, and with whom he had three sons and a daughter. He was later to write in his autobiography that his work in the West would never have been possible without the help and support of his wife.

Towards the end of 1926, he returned to India, where he died the following year, after a short illness.

There were three main aspects to his teachings, firstly to go within oneself using prayer and meditation; secondly, the essential oneness of all religions; and thirdly, brotherhood, the practical outcome of the first two. He taught that the foundation of all creation is an unstruck Sound or Music. He instituted a simple service in which a candle was lit and a short reading

was taken from the teachings of each of the six main world religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam). A seventh candle was lit for "all those, who whether known or unknown in the world, have held aloft the light of truth through the darkness of human ignorance".

He insisted that Sufism implied mysticism in general, and that it existed before Muḥammad, and so pre-dated Islam. When someone asked him the difference between Sufism and other religions, he replied, "The difference is that it casts away all differences."

The Sufi Publishing Society published poetic works such as his *Dīvān* (collected poems), *Hindustani Lyrics* and *The Songs of India*, as well as 'Ināyat Khān's teachings in books such as *The Voice of 'Ināyat, In an Eastern Rose Garden, The Mysticism of Sound* and *Notes of the Unstruck Music*. His teachings also have been published as *The Sufi Message of Hazrat Inayat Khan,* comprising 13 volumes of transcripted talks and lectures given between 1910–26. In India, his most important work was *Minqar-i Musiqar* ('The Singing Bird'), written during his time in Hyderabad, in Hindustani and Persian (1903–06). It containing descriptions of *rāgas* and dances, together with explanations of their inner meanings, along with a selection of verses from Indian poets and himself.

Ion of Chios A fifth-century (BCE) Greek poet, known for his brief biographical sketches on some of his contemporaries, such as Periclēs, Sophoclēs and Socratēs, whom Ion mentions meeting at Samos, together with Archelaus, a student of the philosopher Anaxagoras.

'Irāqī, Shaykh Fakhr al-Dīn Ibrāhīm (1213–89) Born near Hamadān in the village Kamajān; it is said that his father had a dream before he was born in which 'Alī informed him that his boy, 'Irāqī, would be a 'world conqueror'; joined a group of *Qalandarīyah* Sufis at the age of 17, travelling with them through Persia to India; received initiation from Shaykh Bahā'al-Dīn Zakarīyā' Multānī, and was appointed his successor in 1267, but was forced to flee to Konya where he possibly received initiation from Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī. His book *Lama'āt (Divine Flashes),* is a collection of meditations, and is generally regarded as his masterpiece. Although not prolific, he composed poetry throughout his life, and his songs, collected together in his *Dīvān,* are popular today throughout the Persian-speaking world and India.

Irenaeus (*c.*120–202) Born of Greek parents, somewhere in Asia Minor, probably between 120–140; as a child, saw and heard Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, the last-known link with the apostolic era, supposed to have met the apostle John who lived to an advanced age in Ephesus; reported by the fourth-century Eusebius in his *History of the Church* to have been a missionary in

southern Gaul, and to have acted as a mediator among the churches of Asia Minor when troubled by heresy and other difficulties; also said by Eusebius to have succeeded the martyred Pothinus as Bishop of Lugdunum (Lyons) in 177. Only unreliable legends surround his death, but he is presumed to have died around or soon after the year 200, probably in Lyons.

Irenaeus mediated in a dispute between the Roman Church and the churches of Asia Minor concerning the date of Easter. In Rome, it was held that Easter should always be on a Sunday (the day of Christ's resurrection). In Asia Minor, Easter was celebrated on the day of the Jewish Passover (14th of *Nisan*). Irenaeus told the two parties that differences concerning such external matters should not become a source of Christian disunity.

Irenaeus is largely remembered for his work, *Adversus haereses* ('Against Heresies'), a refutation of heresies written around 180, a lengthy harangue against Marcion (leader of a Roman breakaway group) and the gnostics. Though entirely negative and biased in its approach, his work is a valuable source of information on early Christian gnosticism. Written in Greek, the work survives only in a Latin translation of uncertain date (*c*.200–400). In the course of this book, while attempting to establish which Christian writings were authentic and reliable, and which doctrines were correct, Irenaeus moved Christianity towards an accepted creed and canon of scriptures, though never speaking of two testaments, old and new.

One other work attributed to Irenaeus has survived: a short Greek work intended for pre-baptismal instruction, *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*, now existing only in an Armenian translation.

'Īsá Jesus; honoured in Islam along with all the other prophets; considered a *Rasūl* (Messenger) of God; also called *Rūḥ Allāh* (Spirit of God).

See also: **Jesus Christ**.

Isaac Luria (1534–72) Full name, Isaac ben Solomon Luria; commonly known as ha-Ari (the Lion), from the Hebrew initials for ha-Elohi Rabbi Yiẓḥak (the divine Rabbi Isaac); called Rabbi Isaac Ashkenazi by his contemporaries in Safed. The details of Isaac Luria's life are greatly confused by legend. According to the *Toledot ha-Ari* ('Life of the Ari'), an anonymous work of uncertain reliability published 20 years after his death, and containing a mix of legendary and historical information, Isaac Luria's father was an Ashkenazi (a German or Polish Jew) who moved to Jerusalem, where he married a Sephardi girl (a Spanish or North African Jew). His father died while he was still a boy, and the young Isaac was taken to Egypt by his mother, where he was raised in the home of her wealthy brother, Mordecai Frances. In Egypt, he was educated in rabbinic studies, including *halakhah* (Jewish law), and also became involved in business.

The young Isaac is said to have shown early signs of a mystical disposition, and eventually concentrated on the *Zohar* (the primary Kabbalist text) and other works of twelfth- and thirteenth-century Kabbalists, together with those of his contemporary, Moses Cordovero. He met and corresponded with a number of Kabbalists in Egypt, also spending seven years in seclusion on an island in the Nile that was owned by his uncle. During this period, which may have been in the 1550s or when he was older, he wrote a commentary on a section of the *Zohar,* the *Sefer di-Ẓeni'uta* ('Book of Concealment'). Luria's commentary follows a traditional Kabbalistic line of thought, exhibiting nothing of the system with which he was later to expound. At some point, it also seems that he married his cousin, and his uncle thus became his father-in-law.

In 1570, he went to Safed, a mountain town in Galilee that had become a well-known Kabbalist centre, to study with Moses Cordovero, the best-known Kabbalist of the time, who died at the end of that year. Soon after his arrival, Luria began teaching his new system to a select group, attracting many disciples, though not all who applied were accepted. He also protected his teachings from the public eye, and did not permit their propagation during his lifetime. Luria commented that there was no conflict between his teachings and those of Cordovero. Cordovero, he said, dealt with *'olam ha-tohu* (world of confusion), while he himself was concerned with *'olam ha-tikkun* (world of restitution). They were each dealing with different spiritual realms or states of being. Indeed, few Kabbalists have attempted to combine their two teachings into one system. Like many members of the Safed community, he supported himself by means of trade, Safed being on the main route between Egypt and Syria.

Before Luria's arrival, the community of Kabbalists gathered around Cordovero were already living an intensely devout and ascetic life, observing a number of unique rituals. They went out into the fields, for instance, to welcome the Sabbath, personified as the Sabbath Queen. Under Luria's influence, new elements were added to these observances, including various forms of meditation (*kavvanah,* intention, concentration) intended to purify the soul and bring about her restoration to the divine *Ayn-Sof* from whom she had fallen. Luria also introduced a messianic element into the Kabbalah. He taught that historical events and the affairs of man are a part of the unfolding of a great cosmic drama in which the Jewish people are responsible for the final restitution and redemption of the world. The role of the Messiah is not one of redemption. Only when restitution has been accomplished will the Messiah appear. Luria taught for only two years before his sudden death (in the summer of 1572) in an epidemic that swept through the town, but the descriptions given by his disciples in subsequent years attest to his saintly and striking personality. Like many other mystics, his life story was soon embellished by legends and miracle stories.

With the exception of three well-known hymns for Sabbath meals, based on Kabbalist principles and usually included in the Jewish prayer book, Luria himself wrote very little. He himself acknowledges that he had difficulty writing, especially systematizing the flow of his abundant thoughts. His method was to select subjects for elucidation, more or less at random. Among Luria's disciples who taught and wrote of their Master's doctrines after his death were Moses Jonah of Safed, Joseph ben Tabul, and the most renowned of all, Ḥayyim Vital. Vital published an extensive compendium of Luria's doctrines 20 years after his Master's death, entitled *Sefer 'Eẓ Ḥayyim* ('Book of the Tree of Life'). The work included a few fragments of Luria's own writing, notably his commentaries on portions of the *Zohar*.

Luria committed very little to writing, and his disciples' accounts contain variations, depending upon their own interpretations. The doctrines of a fourth significant teacher of Lurianic Kabbalah, Israel Saruk, who taught in Italy and other European countries during the 1590s, based his teachings on the works of Luria's disciples, to which he added his own interpretations and speculations. Because Saruk was the first to spread Luria's teachings in Italy, his teachings and writings were regarded as authentic Lurianic doctrine, although they actually contain a number of significant differences. It was largely Vital's work, however, together with his enthusiasm to gain acceptance for Luria's version of the Kabbalah, that resulted in the endurance of Lurianic Kabbalism, influencing all later Jewish mysticism, including eighteenth-century Hasidism.

See also: **The Kabbalah** (1.4), **ẓimẓum** (5.2).

Isaac of Antioch (*d.c.*460) A native of Amida (near modern Erzurum, in Turkey); a Syrian Christian and Syriac author of a considerable body theological writings and historical verse concerning events in Asia Minor and Rome; seems to have travelled widely, composing verse about the civic festivals in Rome of 404, and the sack of Rome by the Visigoths under Alaric, in 410, an event heralding the final fall of the western Roman Empire; was briefly jailed in Constantinople for reasons unknown; settled in a Jacobite Christian community at Antioch in Syria (now Antakya, Turkey), where he may have been ordained as a priest; author of an extensive account in verse of the destruction of Antioch by earthquake in 459; credited as the author of two collections of poetic discourses, together with a number of commentaries on theological and ascetic topics. This variety of material, with sometimes differing styles and viewpoints has suggested that there were two or three contemporary writers of the same name, living in or around Antioch, whose works have been incorrectly ascribed to a single author.

Isaac the Blind (*c.*1160–1235) Also called *Sagi Nahor* (abundant light); commonly known as *he-Ḥasid* (the pious one); a significant early Kabbalist, of whom few biographical details have survived; known largely from the writings of his disciples, and the tradition that formed after them, together with a few extant fragments of his writings; son of Abraham ben David (*c.*1120–1197) of Posquières, in Provence, France, and associated with the Kabbalists of that region; generally believed by thirteenth-century Kabbalists to have been born blind, though his evident familiarity with books suggests otherwise; said by Shem Tov ben Abraham ibn Ga'on (1287–1330) to have been able to sense whether a soul was old or new – whether or not the soul had experienced transmigration; also said to have experienced the 'revelation of Elijah' and other mystical states.

Isaac's doctrine appears to have been based upon the description of the *sefirot* (divine emanations) outlined in the *Sefer ha-Bahir* ('Book of Illumination'), first published around 1176 in Provence, when Isaac was a young man. He writes of three levels within the Godhead: the *Ayn-Sof*, which is beyond all description, and the *sefirot* of *Maḥshavah* (Thought) and *Dibbur* (Speech, Utterance). According to Isaac, the *Maḥshavah* should not be regarded as a part of the ten *sefirot*, and he makes up the deficiency by adding the *sefirah* (emanation) of *Haskel* (Intellect), locating it between *Maḥshavah* and the *sefirah* of *Ḥokhmah* (Wisdom). *Maḥshavah* is the *Ayn-Sof* revealed, the first *sefirah* or expression of the Divine; it is the ultimate goal to which all mystic *kavvanah* (intention, concentration) or meditation is directed. He also calls it *Ayin* (Nothingness), for it is 'no thing', no substance. From the divine Nothingness, emanates the ten *sefirot*, and thence the entire creation.

Isaac conceived of the creative process symbolically as God's Utterance *(Dibbur)*, commonly depicting the *sefirot* as words *(devarim)* or utterances *(dibburim)*. Thus, the *sefirot* and the creative process is God's expression or language, a process which originates with *Ḥokhmah*. His system was essentially a practical path of *ẓepiyyah* (contemplation), *kavvanah* and devotion. He taught that the outward emanative process exists simultaneously with the inward return of all things to the Divine in contemplative *teshuvah* (repentance). The creation is new every moment, a balance of emanation and return; it is God contemplating Himself.

See also: **Asher ben David**, **'Azri'el of Gerona**.

Īshāvāsya Upanishad, **Īsha Upanishad** (S) Belonging to the *Yajur Veda*, the name of this *Upanishad* is taken from its first word, meaning 'pervaded by' *(vāsya)* the Lord *(Īsha)*; a short *Upanishad* dealing with the *ātman* (self) and various aspects of the inner spiritual path.

See also: **Upanishads**.

Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (*c.*702–765) *Lit.* Ja'far the Trustworthy *(al-Ṣādiq)*; born, lived, taught and died in Madīnah; a famous scholar of religion and mysticism; considered by the Twelve-*Imām* Shi'ites to be the sixth *Imām* in line from the fourth Caliph, 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (Muḥammad's cousin), regarded by Shi'ites as their founder, and the first *Imām* after Muḥammad; son of the fifth *Imām*, Muḥammad al-Bāqir, and great-grandson of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib; descended on his mother's side from the first Caliph, Abū Bakr, who is considered a usurper by most Shi'ites; father of Ismā'īl, from whom began the *Ismā'īlīyah* gnostic movement.

Ja'far was teacher to a circle of gifted students, including Abū Ḥanīfah and Mālik ibn Anas, respective founders of the *Ḥanafīyah* and *Mālikīyah*, two of the four accepted schools of Islamic religious law, and also Wāṣil ibn 'Aṭā', founder of the rationalist *Mu'tazilah* school. The alchemist, Jābir ibn Ḥayyān (Geber), also credited Ja'far with many of the original scientific ideas for which Jābir himself became known. Ja'far believed in limited predestination in which God allowed human beings some freedom of choice (a popular compromise), that a *ḥadīth* should be rejected if it conflicted with the *Qur'ān*, and that Muḥammad's mission was a primordial ray of light, created before Adam, manifested in Muḥammad, and passed on to Muḥammad's successors.

It is uncertain whether the Shi'ite concept and nomination of the twelve *Imāms*, as infallible religious leaders, really originated before the tenth century. There is certainly no record of Ja'far ever declaring himself as the *Imām* after his father's death. However, the Shi'ites did believe that leadership of Islām rightfully belonged to the descendants of 'Alī. Consequently, as the foremost Shi'ite and possible claimant of the Caliphate, Ja'far's position was watched, especially by the 'Abbasids (descendants not of 'Alī, but of Abbās, one of Muḥammad's uncles), who had ousted the Ummayads and taken control of the Caliphate in the revolt of 749–750. Ja'far was therefore summoned to the new 'Abbasid capital, Baghdad, by the Caliph, al-Manṣūr (ruled 754–775), where he could be watched. After convincing the ruler that he posed no threat, he was permitted to return home. Baghdad, founded by al-Manṣūr as a more central city from which to rule, was built on the site of a village of the same name. Growing rapidly, it soon became larger than any European city, and the centre from which Islamic wealth and culture spread throughout the Muslim world.

Jagat Singh, Sardār Bahādur (1884–1951) An Indian Saint *(Sant)*; born in the village of Nussī in the Punjab, not far from Beas; initiated when he was 26 years old by Mahārāj Sāwan Singh; taught at the Punjab Agricultural College in Lyallpur, retiring in 1943 as Vice Principal; highly regarded by his colleagues and fellow disciples for his spirituality and integrity. Following retirement, he spent the remainder of his life in his Master's service at

Dera Baba Jaimal Singh. In 1948, his Master appointed him his successor, a position which he occupied for three years, during a time of great social and political turmoil in India following independence from British rule and the consequent partition.

A scientist and man of few words, he is known as the 'perfect disciple', serving his Master with complete faith for 39 years before being appointed Master. On his death, he was succeeded by Mahārāj Charan Singh. A compilation of his discourses, and excerpts from his letters to seekers and disciples, entitled *The Science of the Soul,* was published after his death.

Jagjīvan Sāhib (1682–1750) An Indian Saint *(Sant);* born in Sarhadā, district Bārābankī, in Uttar Pradesh; a disciple of Bullā Sāhib who taught the path of the Word; had his headquarters in the village of Koṭwa, Bārābankī; an author whose works include *Gyān Prakāsh* ('Light of Knowledge'), *Mahā Pralaya* ('Grand Dissolution'), *Pratham Granth* ('The First Book') and *Shabd Sāgar* ('Ocean of Shabd').

Jaimal Singh, Bābā (1839–1903) An Indian Saint *(Sant);* born into an agricultural family of Jat Sikhs, in Ghumān, in the Punjab; initiated by Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh (1818–78) of Agra; joined the army, on the advice of his Master, where he served for nearly 33 years, retiring in 1889; appointed by his Master as a *Guru,* to teach in the Punjab. After retirement from military service, Bābā Jaimal Singh chose a secluded place on the western bank of the river Beas to pursue uninterrupted meditation. Soon seekers began to visit him, laying the foundation for organized *satsang* (meetings with discourses). During his lifetime, a well was dug, some basic accommodation was built, and two small halls were constructed. Several months before his death on December 29th 1903, he appointed Mahārāj Sāwan Singh as his successor, the latter naming the nascent colony, Dera Baba Jaimal Singh, in memory of his Master. Bābā Jaimal Singh's letters to Mahārāj Sāwan Singh, written between 1894 and 1903, have been published as the book, *Spiritual Letters,* providing a unique insight into the formative years of a future Master.

Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī See **Rūmī, Jalāl al-Dīn**.

James, The Epistle of A New Testament letter stated in its initial address to be from "James, a servant of God"; generally attributed to James the brother of Jesus, leader of the earliest Judaeo-Christian community in Jerusalem (though not one of the twelve apostles), who was martyred by the Jews around the year 62. The letter is written in Greek, with frequent Hebraisms, by someone familiar with the Old Testament, and in a typically didactic Jewish style. The language is so rich, however, that many scholars have found

it hard to accept that the writer could have been a Galilean. On the other hand, Greek was the *lingua franca* of the day, spoken throughout Palestine, and there is no reason why James (and Jesus, too) should not have spoken Greek. Some people are also better natural linguists than others. The writer could also have received help from someone more competent in the language. However, the situation depicted in the letter reflects a state of ecclesiastical organization presumed to have existed some time after the death of James. There is therefore reason to believe that the letter is pseudo-epigraphic, or from an altogether unknown James, probably written around the turn of the first century.

The letter is addressed "to the twelve tribes of the Diaspora (Dispersion)", *i.e.* to Jewish immigrants settled outside Palestine. More a sermon than a letter, its consists almost entirely of moral and ethical advice. The author is thus presumed to have had no proselytizing intent, but to be writing to established Christian communities. He counsels steadfastness in times of trial, control of the tongue, making no distinction between rich and poor, disharmony, and patience regarding the arrival of the Second Coming, which the writer believed to be imminent. He points out that the source of temptation is always within oneself, not God; he praises the poor and admonishes the rich; he also insists that faith is nothing if not put into practice and, in a well-known passage, criticizes those who preach doctrine without action ("Faith without works is dead" 2:20, *KJV*).

Jāmī, Shaykh Nūr al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Aḥmad (1414–92) Born in the town of Jām; often regarded as the last great Sufi Persian poet; a member of the *Naqshbandīyah* order of Sufis; passed much of his life in Herāt; received many offers of patronage from various rulers, most of which he declined, preferring a quiet, contemplative and scholarly life to that of court poet.

Jāmī's works are characterized by freshness, vitality and clarity. His prose works include Quranic commentaries, and treatises on Sufism and music; his poetry deals with mystical, philosophical and ethical subjects. His best-known books are the *Bahāristān* ('Abode of Spring'); *Lawā'iḥ* ('Flashes'), a concise exposition of Sufi doctrine concerning *waḥdat al-wujūd* – unity of being – along with observations on the experiences of other well known Sufis; *Nafaḥāt al-Uns* (*lit.* fragrant breaths of the intimate), a biography of Sufi saints; and *Haft Awrang* ('Seven Thrones'), a seven-part collection that includes *Yūsuf and Zulaykhā* and *Salāmān and Absāl,* an allegorical poem concerning the creation of man and his return to God.

janamsākhī (Pu) *Lit.* birth *(janam)* witness *(sākhī);* stories related in the Sikh tradition concerning the birth and life of Guru Nānak (1469–1539). Although a number of *janamsākhīs* are in circulation, they all stem from essentially

four main traditions. Firstly, there are the *Purātan Janamsākhīs* (ancient *janamsākhī*). Of these, two manuscripts are the most significant: the Colebrooke or *Vilāyat Vālī Janamsākhī* (the 'overseas' *janamsākhī*), originally donated to the Library of East India House by H.T. Colebrooke in 1815 or 1816 and rediscovered in 1872 by the historian of Sikhism, Dr Trumpp, while examining the *Gurmukhī* manuscripts at the India Office Library; and the *Hāfizābad Janamsākhī*, found sometime around 1884 in Hāfizābad. The text of these two *janamsākhīs* is very similar, with few divergences, and they clearly share a common origin. Neither bears an explicit date, but the *Colebrooke Janamsākhī* points to 1635 as the date of original composition. Other indications also suggest the first half of the seventeenth century as the date of composition. This is more than a hundred years after the death of Guru Nānak.

A number of other *janamsākhī* manuscripts in the *Purātan* tradition have subsequently been discovered. Of these, one acquired by the India Office Library in 1907, numbered *MSS. Pañjābī B40* in their catalogue, is the most significant. After following the Hāfizābad manuscript in its early part, it diverges, and very little of it subsequently corresponds to the Colebrooke and Hāfizābad text. Interestingly, the stories are less elaborate, and seem to represent an earlier stage in the *janamsākhī* tradition. Some of them consist of little more than a verse from Guru Nānak with a brief narrative to provide a setting.

The second of the four main *janamsākhī* traditions is the *Meharbān janamsākhī*, attributed to Soḍhī Meharbān (1581–1640), son of Prithī Chand (1558–1619), the eldest son of Guru Rāmdās, who disputed the succession of his younger brother, Guru Arjun, and developed a following of his own. His group came to be known as the *Mīṇās*. Because the *Mīṇās* were understood to have been inimical to the Gurus from the time of Guru Arjun, it was generally assumed that this ill-feeling would have permeated the writings of Meharbān. In the absence of his *janamsākhī*, the prejudice persisted. In 1940, however, a manuscript of half of the *janamsākhī* was discovered at Damdamā. Contrary to popular belief, the content was entirely favourable towards Guru Nānak. In fact, the narrative material is remarkably restrained, and serves largely as the setting for expositions of the Guru's teachings.

The complete work once consisted of six *poṭhīs* (books), of which only the first book *(Poṭhī Sach Khaṇḍ)* was attributed to Meharbān. Three of the six books were contained in the manuscript discovered at Damdamā, but only the *Poṭhī Sach Khaṇḍ* contains biographical material concerning Guru Nānak. The other two books are purely expositions of the Guru's teachings, as indeed were the final three, which have never been found. *Poṭhī Sach Khaṇḍ* is believed to have been written between 1640 and Meharbān's death in 1650. Like the *Purātan* texts, this is more than a hundred years after the death of the Guru.

The third of the *janamsākhī* traditions is the *Bālā Janamsākhī*, attributed to Bhāī Bālā, a disciple of Guru Nānak. According to popular tradition, these stories were dictated by Bhāī Bālā in the presence of the second Guru, Guru Angad. Prior to the discovery of the two *Purātan Janamsākhīs*, the *Bālā Janamsākhī* was the primary source of stories concerning Guru Nānak. Even today, the popular *janamsākhīs* sold in bookstalls are based on the Bālā tradition. However, the tradition contains many factual errors, and the legendary elaboration of the stories far surpasses that of the other *janamsākhīs*. Scholars readily dismiss the traditional story concerning its origins. So where has it come from?

The original manuscript versions of the *janamsākhīs* are of help here, for they contain numerous indications that they are the product of the *Hiṇḍālīs*, a seventeenth-century breakaway group contemporary with the sixth Guru. Whether the entire work was the product of the *Hiṇḍālīs* or whether the *Hiṇḍālīs* overwrote an earlier *janamsākhī* is uncertain. The regular published versions of the *Bālā Janamsākhī* makes no mention of the *Hiṇḍālīs* because all such material has been purged by the publishers.

The last of the four *janamsākhī* traditions is the *Gyān Ratanāvalī*, attributed to Bhāī Manī Singh, a respected member of the Sikh community in the time of the tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh (Guru, 1675–1708). According to an account given at the start of the work, Bhāī Manī Singh was requested by a number of disciples to prepare an authoritative account of the life of Guru Nānak. He referred them to the *Vārān* of Bhāī Gurdās, but they replied that they wanted an expanded version, presumably one that related to the many *sākhīs* that were in circulation. It is supposed that Bhāī Manī Singh consented, and that the work was approved by Guru Gobind Singh.

However, the surviving version of the *Gyān Ratanāvalī* is not the work of Bhāī Manī Singh. It is a composite document, drawing on a number of *janamsākhī* sources including the Bālā tradition, as well as Bhāī Manī Singh's original collection of *sākhīs*. As a source of historical information concerning the life of Guru Nānak, it has much the same value as the other *janamsākhīs* (*GNS* pp.15–24).

Jazā'irī, Shaykh Abū Bakr al- (1921–99) A twentieth-century Muslim, born near al-Jazā'ir in Algeria; lost his father when he was less than a year old, and raised by his mother; educated in his home town, and worked as a teacher in al-Jazā'ir; left his native country in 1952, during the fight against French colonialization; settled in Madīnah, in Saudia Arabia, where he became a teacher in the Mosque of the Prophet, later joining al-Madīnah University; aligned in thought to the eighteenth-century *Wahabīyah* and the nineteenth-century *Salafīyah* reformist groups, both holding strictly orthodox views; believed that Sufism was the reason why the Muslims lost their struggle against European colonialism; author of a number of books, including

Manhaj al-Muslim ('Way of a Muslim'), *'Ayīdah Mu'min* ('Believer's Creed'), and the anti-Sufism book, *'Illat-i Taṣawwuf yā 'Ibādallāh* ('Run to Sufism, O Servants of *Allāh*'). His teachings have been the centre of considerable on-going controversy within Islam.

Jeremiah The biblical book of seventh-century Jeremiah, a major Israelite prophet who prophesied the impending destruction of the kingdom of Israel and the exile that followed, as expressions of divine punishment for sin, emphasizing the need for repentance as a way to find God's forgiveness and love.

Jerome (*c.*347–420) Latin name, Eusebius Hieronymus; born into a wealthy family at Stridon, in Dalmatia (now in Croatia), probably near modern Ljubljana; educated at home during his early years, then in Rome from the age of 12, studying grammar, rhetoric, philosophy and Latin literature; baptized towards the end of his stay in Rome, around 366, possibly by Pope Liberius (pope, 352–366); visited Treveris (now Trier, western Germany) soon after, where he became interested in monasticism; returned to Stridon around 369; went to Aquileia (in northeast Italy, on the Adriatic), where he met Rufinus (who later translated Origen and others) and was part of an ascetically oriented group; travelled East after the break up of the group (*c.*373).

In 374, Jerome reached Antioch, the centre of Eastern Christianity, where – travel-weary and inwardly troubled – he stayed with the mystically-minded theologian, Evagrius (346–399). It was probably around this time that he wrote his first-known work, *De septies percussa* ('Concerning Seven Beatings'). In Lent of 375, while very ill, he had an influential dream in which he was dragged before a divine tribunal, accused of being a follower of the first-century (BCE) Roman, Cicero, and severely whipped. For many years, the dream prevented him from reading classical literature. As a result of the dream, Jerome composed his first biblical commentary, an allegorical interpretation of *Obadiah,* which two decades later he dismissed as the product of ignorant and impassioned youth.

In 375, he began a two-year stretch as a hermit in the desert of Chalcis, in quest of inner peace. Although claiming to be happy, he admits to being racked by sexual desire, which he countered by fasting and constant prayer. He also disliked desert food, which upset his stomach. Unable to speak the Syriac and Greek of the country, and a novice in ascetic life with no experienced guide, he kept up an active correspondence with friends. He also learnt Hebrew from a Jewish convert, and studied Greek. He returned to Antioch, after becoming involved a theological dispute.

Known by now as a monk and scholar of significance, Paulinus, Bishop of Antioch, offered to ordain Jerome, who accepted on condition that his

monastic aspirations would not be compromised, and that he would not be coerced into ecclesiastical duties. Jerome now entered on several years' study of the scriptures, with such notables as Gregory of Nazianus (*c.*329–389, Bishop of Caesarea), at the same time improving his Greek. He also visited the Judaeo-Christians (Nazarenes) of Beroea to see a copy of the *Gospel of the Hebrews*, which they claimed to be the original gospel of Matthew. During this period, he studied Origen (*c.*185–254), for whom he developed a high regard, translating 14 of his sermons on the Old Testament into Latin. He also translated Eusebius' *History of the Church*, carrying it forward from 324 (where Eusebius had left it) to 378.

From 382–385, Jerome was in Rome as secretary to Pope Damasus. Here, he continued both his literary work and his interest in monastic life. He translated more of Origen and, commissioned by Damasus, he also revised the Old Latin translation of the gospels in the light of the best Greek manuscripts at his disposal. Likewise, though less successfully, he revised the Old Latin Psalter, based on Greek *Septuagint* manuscripts. At the same time, he became spiritual director to a group of monastically minded Roman widows and virgins, among whom were Paula and her two daughters.

However, his criticism of the Roman clergy, self-indulgent monks and insincere virgins, together with his gospel corrections, aroused such a storm of criticism that he left Rome ("Babylon", he called it bitterly). Accompanied by Paula and a group of virgins, he set out on a pilgrimage to Palestine and the monastic centres of Egypt. In 386, he was in Bethlehem, where Paula completed a monastery (under Jerome's direction), a convent (under her own), and a serai for pilgrims. Here Jerome lived, apart from brief trips, for the next 34 years.

During this time, he continued his prodigious literary output, much of which was in response to the various controversies of the day. He was caught up in the anti-Origen bandwagon, turning against the work of the man he had once admired. He quarrelled with Augustine, who had had the temerity to criticize his biblical work. He wrote in support of a celibate clergy, and of virginity in general rather than marriage. He continued his revision of the Old Latin translation of the Old Testament, this time working from the Hebrew, a task he completed around 405, his translation becoming known as the *Vulgate*. He composed commentaries (often allegorical) on Old Testament texts and on four of Paul's letters, and wrote a literal interpretation of Matthew. He also maintained a vigorous and at times contentious correspondence with various ecclesiastical notables, together with various monks and virgins under his spiritual direction.

Jerome was a learned though temperamental scholar; a traditionalist responding to circumstances rather than an original thinker; a translator and interpreter, not a creative writer. His influence has been far-reaching, not only through the *Vulgate*, which became the everyday Latin Bible of the

Church, but also through his biblical commentaries and his part in the transmission of Greek thought to the West.

See also: **Rufinus**.

Jesus Christ (*c.*6 BCE – 30 CE) Also called Jesus the Messiah, Jesus of Galilee and Jesus of Nazareth; regarded as the founder of Christianity. The history and teachings of Jesus are known entirely from Christian tradition and legend. It seems that he was born of Jewish parents in Judaea, and that his apparently short life passed almost unnoticed by the majority of his contemporaries. He wrote not one word that has survived, and none of the stories concerning him can be traced to him with any degree of certainty. The accounts in the Christian gospels – from which all that is known about him is derived – are conflicting, at variance with the known history of the period, and reflect the beliefs of later Christians. He is mentioned very briefly by the Jewish historian, Josephus (*c.*37–100), by the Roman governor of Bithynia, Pliny the Younger (*c.*62–113), and the Roman historians, Suetonius (*c.*75–150) and Tacitus (*c.*55–120), none of whom have anything more to say about him than passing comments based on current popular traditions.

See also: **Christianity** (1.5).

Jewish Prayer Book A collection of hymns written over the centuries, together with biblical selections, collated into a specific order for weekdays, Sabbaths and festivals, with specific liturgies for morning, afternoon and evening prayers.

Jīlānī, 'Abd al-Qādir al- (*c.*1077–1166) A Persian Sufi from Nayf (Nīf), in the region of Jīlān, south of the Caspian Sea; credited with founding the *Qādirīyah* order of Sufis; studied Islamic law in Baghdad; came to Sufism somewhat late in life; first appeared as a teacher in 1127, reconciling Sufi mystical doctrines with orthodox Islam, and attracting a large number of followers from throughout the Muslim world, including many Christians and Jews; became known as the *quṭb* (spiritual axis or Saint) of his time; taught submission to God, and that the true holy war *(jihād)* is to be waged against one's own egotism and worldliness; the subject of many apocryphal stories concerning his holiness, and still regarded by some as an intercessor with the Divine; died and is buried in Baghdad, where his tomb is still venerated. Two collections of his discourses are extant, both well-known to Islamic readers: *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* ('Divine Revelation') and *al-Futūḥ al-Ghayb* ('Revelations of the Unseen').

Jīlī, 'Abd al-Karīm Quṭb al-Dīn ibn Ibrāhīm al- (*c.*1365–1428) A Sufi of whom little is known; a descendant of 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, founder of the *Qādirīyah* order of Sufis; relates that he had travelled to India (probably in 1387) before living in Zabīd in Yemen (possibly around 1393–1403) with his *Shaykh*, Sharaf al-Dīn Ismā'īl ibn Ibrāhīm al-Jabartī; author of more than 30 works, of which the best known is *al-Insān al-Kāmil fī Ma'rifat al-Awākhir wa-al-Awā'il* ('The Perfect Man in Knowledge of the Last and First Things'), an exposition of the manifestations of absolute Being as Essence, Names, Attributes and Divinity, and of corresponding spiritual stages on the path of union. He taught that the great prophets, from Adam to Muḥammad, had all been 'perfect men', and had attained oneness with the divine Being. An adherent of Ibn 'Arabī, al-Jīlī also wrote a commentary on Ibn 'Arabī's *Futūḥāt* ('Revelations'). His writings express the teachings of Ibn 'Arabī in a systematic and a unique manner.

Job One of the later books included in the biblical canon; possibly written in the early fifth century BCE; set in the form of a poetic dialogue concerning Job, a rich, happy and righteous man whom God permits Satan to test, putting Job through a series of catastrophes. Divine justice, suffering and piety are the subjects of the discussion between Job and several characters, who are the personifications of doubt. Job maintains his faith in God despite all adversity, and ultimately his faith is vindicated.

Joel The biblical book of the prophet, Joel, the second of the twelve 'minor prophets'; a short book in two distinct parts, one prophesying a plague of locusts, the other the Day of *Yahweh*, from both of which repentance and prayer are proposed as the means of deliverance; difficult to date because it contains no biographical or other information from which to establish a date, and because Joel is not mentioned in any other biblical books; probably written around 400 BCE. Echoes of *Joel* are present in *Amos* and *Malachi*, but there is nothing to link them directly to *Joel*.

John Fire Lame Deer (1903–76) A chief of the Mnikowoju tribe, and a Lakota (Sioux) holy man from the Rosebud Reservation, South Dakota; the father of Archie Fire Lame Deer.

See **Some Recent Native Americans** (1.14).

John, Gospel According to St The New Testament gospel attributed to the apostle John, the "beloved disciple" of Jesus, though who the author really was is a matter of debate.

See **John's Gospel** (1.5).

John of the Cross (1542–91) Original name, Juan de Yepes y Alvarez; born in Fontiveros, near Ávila, in Spain; lost his father in 1543, while still a baby; as a child, moved to Arévalo, and then to Medina del Campo; educated in Medina at the Colegio de los Niños de la Doctrina and the College of the Society of Jesus; joined the Carmelite order at Medina del Campo in 1563; took a three-year course in Arts at the University of Salamanca, graduating in 1565; ordained as a priest in 1567, returning to the University for a one-year course in theology.

In 1567, John first met Teresa of Ávila. He was thinking of joining the Carthusian order, and Teresa asked him to join her Discalced (barefoot) Carmelite reform movement, whose ideals were to restore the original Carmelite austerity. The first Discalced Carmelite monastery was opened in 1569. Between 1568 and 1574, he lived in a number of Discalced Carmelite communities, acting variously as rector, confessor and adviser.

Feelings ran high among the Calced Carmelites concerning the reform movement, and in 1576, John was kidnapped by them, and imprisoned in their priory in Medina del Campo. It is said that the morning after his capture, he managed to escape. Returning to his monastery, he barely had enough time to destroy some important papers (some by swallowing), probably regarding the infant reform movement, before recapture. Later, he was freed by the intervention of a high papal official.

In 1577, he was again kidnapped, this time being imprisoned at the Calced priory in Toledo. Here, his jailer was a kindly man, doing what he could to reduce his prisoner's sufferings. During this period, he composed some stanzas of *The Spiritual Canticle,* and possibly *The Dark Night of the Soul,* and other works. The following year, managing to escape to the Carmelite convent in Toledo, he eventually reached home with the escort of the Canon of Toledo.

From then until the end of his life, John remained active in the reformed Carmelite movement, founding and visiting various monasteries and convents, and (in 1579) founding a reform college at Baeza. From 1582–88, he was based in Granada. From 1585–87, he was Vicar Provincial of Andalusia (southwest Spain). He still had his opponents, however, even within the movement, and in June 1591, the Chapter-General in Madrid relieved John of all his positions, intending to send him to Mexico, a decision which was later revoked. In September of that year, John contracted a high fever while staying at La Peñuela. He moved to Ubeda, where he died in December of the same year. He was beatified in 1675, and canonized in 1726.

John of the Cross is regarded as one of the finest Spanish writers in Christian mysticism. His poems, *The Dark Night of the Soul, Spiritual Canticle* and *The Living Flame of Love* (the latter written around 1585, in 15 days, at the request of a certain Doña Ana de Peñalosa), together with his commen-

taries on them, depict the soul's spiritual ascent and love of God. Much of his work was written in response to the demands of his flock. His stay in Granada was an especially productive period, during which time he completed *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, and wrote his other prose treatises.

Joseph and Aseneth An apocryphal legend, stemming from early Christian times, possibly as early as the first century, almost certainly written in Greek by someone with a Jewish and Christian background; takes, as its theme, the betrothal and marriage of Joseph – portrayed as a man of the Spirit and a Son of God – to Aseneth, daughter of Pentephres, priest of Heliopolis; a symbolic story, containing many elements that convey a primarily gnostic message; a legend elaborated from a passing comment in *Genesis* (41:46). The earliest known manuscript is a Syriac translation, dated no later than 569, where it is preceded by a letter addressed to a certain Moses of Ingila. The writer of the letter says that he found the text in a very old Greek book, and asks for a translation and interpretation of the story which he clearly considers to be an allegory. Only a part of Moses' answer is preserved, but from this it seems that Moses of Ingila understood the text to describe the union of the soul (symbolized as Aseneth) with the divine *Logos* or Word of God (represented by Joseph).

Josephus, Flavius (*c.*37–100 CE) Original name, Joseph ben Matthias; born into an aristocratic priestly family in Jerusalem; showed early signs of a scholarly future, acquiring an early knowledge of Jewish law; at 16, began a retreat of three years in the desert with the hermit Bannus, a Jewish ascetic; returned to Jerusalem and joined the Pharisees; was sent to Rome in 64 CE (where he was much impressed with Roman culture, organization and military strength) to obtain the release of some Jewish priests, a mission accomplished with the help of Nero's second wife, Poppaea Sabina.

Though in favour of compromise with the Romans, Josephus was appointed military commander of Galilee in the unsuccessful Jewish revolt of 66–70. Ultimately, he surrendered and was held captive, but escaped execution by 'prophesying', when in chains before Vespasian (the Roman general in command of quelling the uprising) that the general would be the next emperor. Released in 69, when his prediction came true, he adopted Vespasian's family name of Flavius, and returned to Rome with his protector. In 70, during the siege of Jerusalem, Josephus tried to mediate, but hated by the Jews as a turncoat and distrusted by the Romans as a Jew, he was ineffective. After the sack of Jerusalem in 70, he returned to Rome, where he passed the remainder of his life in literary pursuits under imperial patronage. Josephus was granted Roman citizenship, received a Roman pension in addition to a tax-free income from his Judaean estate, and married his

fourth wife, an heiress from Crete. His first wife had died in the Jewish revolt; his second deserted him in Judaea; and he divorced the third whom he had married soon after his arrival in Rome.

In his first work, *Jewish Wars*, written in Aramaic and translated with assistance into excellent Greek, he stresses the futility of armed resistance to the invincible might of Rome. In *Antiquities of the Jews*, he presents Judaism to the Hellenistic world, describing Jewish history and customs from the creation to 66 CE. His other works are largely in support of Judaism against Hellenistic writers, as well as personal explanations of his actions during the Jewish rebellion. Despite the patronage and no doubt necessary protection afforded him by the Romans, Josephus remained committed to his Jewish faith.

Joshua A historical book of the Bible, relating the story of the Israelites after the death of Moses, and their entry into the promised land of Canaan under the leadership of Joshua (*c.*1240 BCE), the spiritual and political successor of Moses; recounts Joshua's battles and conquests, the division of the promised land among the twelve tribes, and the people's covenant to God to always be faithful to Him.

Judah ben Barzillai Also known as ha-Nasi and al-Bargeloni; a late-eleventh- and early-twelfth-century rabbi of Barcelona; an important authority on Jewish *halakhah* (law). He wrote on topics such as the Sabbath and Jewish festivals, civil law, marriage and personal law. Like many others, he also wrote a commentary on the early mystical text, the *Sefer Yeẓirah* ('Book of Formation'). His works were influential, and were much used and quoted until the sixteenth century, after which other legal codes gained favour, largely because of Judah ben Barzillai's wide range and excessive wordiness.

Judges More correctly, 'Chieftains'; a historical book of the Bible, written around 1200–1000 BCE, relating the continuous infighting among the Israelites following the death of Joshua, their intermarriage among people of the surrounding nations, their worship of idols and pagan gods, and their engaging in various base practices. God then sends the 'chieftains', who embody the Spirit of God, and the people rediscover the pure worship of God, subsequently reverting once again to forgetfulness of their covenant with Him; includes the stories of Deborah, and Samson and Delilah.

Junayd, Abū al-Qāsim ibn Muḥammad al- (*d.*910) An early Sufi of whose life, little is known; born and raised in Baghdad, where he earned his living as a merchant; initiated into Sufism by his uncle, Sarī al-Saqaṭī; taught his disciples to live a family life while pursuing the mystic path; regarded as the founder, together with al-Muḥāsibī (*d.*857), of the path of *ṣaḥw*

(sobriety), and the most renowned of the early Sufis; quoted by later Sufis to such an extent that he became known by several epithets, including *Sulṭān al-'Ārifīn* (king of mystics) and *Shaykh al-Mashā'ikh* (Master of Masters); spoke of recognizing God, the one and only Doer, as He was before creation; author of a number of treatises, including *Kitāb al-Fanā'* ('Book of Annihilation'), *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd* ('Book on Unification') and *Kitāb Dawā' al-Arwāḥ* ('Book on the Remedy for Souls'); the *Shaykh* of Shaykh Shiblī, another well-known Sufi. Of Junayd's works, only his treatises and a series of letters have survived. He is not thought to have written any extensive exposition of his teachings, but they are reported in the *al-Luma' fī al-Taṣawwuf* ('Light on Sufism') of al-Sarrāj (*d.*988).

Jurjānī, Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Sayyid al-Sharīf al- (*c.*1339–1413) Born at Jurjān or Tājū near Astarābād in the Caspian province of Iran; studied at Herāt under Muḥammad al-Fanārī in Qaramān, travelling with him on a visit to Egypt, where he continued his studies; visited Constantinople in 1374; returned in 1377, and received a teaching post in Shīrāz. A decade later, in 1387, Shīrāz was taken by the Mongol conqueror, Tīmūr (Tamerlane). Jurjānī had by then become well known as a teacher and scholar, and he was taken to Tīmūr's capital, Samarkand, in Transoxania (now roughly Uzbekistan). On Tīmūr's death in 1405, he returned to Shīrāz, where he passed the remainder of his life.

Jurjānī was a writer on Islamic religious studies, as well as philosophy, science, astronomy, mathematics, logic, grammar, syntax, debate and rhetoric. Brockelmann enumerates 31 of his works, all of which are in Arabic. Rieu's Persian catalogue mentions three Persian works and an Arabic grammar. Jurjānī is known largely because of his *Kitāb al-Ta'rīfāt* ('Book of Definitions'), a treatise on Sufi technical terms.

Justin Martyr (*d.c.*165) Born, probably sometime between 100–115 CE, at Flavia Neapolis (now Nabulus), in Palestine, where he was raised; writes that he is the "son of Priscus and grandson of Bacchius, natives of Flavia Neapolis", probably of Roman origin; a Greek-speaking pagan; educated in Platonic, Stoic, Cynic and other Greek philosophies before adopting Christianity, perhaps around 132, possibly at Ephesus in Asia Minor (near modern Selçuk, Turkey); began the life of a wandering 'missionary' not long after 135, intending to convert educated pagans; settled in Rome where he lived for some years; denounced to the Romans as subversive after debates with the Cynics, and martyred; one of the most important of the early Christian fathers.

The significance of Justin Martyr is that he is the first known Christian to have justified Christianity by reference to Greek philosophy. He believed that the essence of both Platonism and Christianity is the same transcendent God. The divine *Logos* (Reason, Intelligence, Word), well known to the

Greek philosophers, was (he believed) only partially revealed to them, but was fully revealed in Jesus as the incarnation of the *Logos*. Jesus therefore came to teach the whole Truth, and to deliver men from the power of "wicked demons". It is because the *Logos* is also the essence of man's being that not only can man understand the essential nature of creation, but he also has an affinity with the Divine, possessing the freedom to choose between good and evil. Justin Martyr thus laid the foundations of a Christian theology, based on Greek philosophy, an approach which was built upon by the later fathers.

Justin's extant works include two *Apologies* for Christianity, addressed to the Romans. In his *First Apology*, he points out that Christians are not atheistic and that they pose no threat to the Roman Empire, going on to outline his philosophy, and ending with an objective description of the early Christian Eucharist and baptism rituals (which had been portrayed in lurid terms by Christian detractors). In his *Second Apology*, he argues that the Roman Christians are being unfairly treated.

In his *Dialogue with the Jew Trypho*, he maintains that Jesus is the Jewish Messiah, foretold by the prophets. He is the fulfilment of the old covenant, now superseded by a new covenant. Jesus is the incarnation of the *Logos*, through whom God revealed Himself in the Jewish scriptures. The Jews were once the chosen people of God, but now it is the turn of the Gentiles. The argument is more or less the same as the one he uses concerning Greek philosophy, but set in a Jewish context. The two streams meet and merge in Christianity. Of interest is his belief that the course of history is divinely charted for the purpose of human salvation, reaching its fulfilment in the ministry of Jesus.

Interestingly, Justin refers to the first three gospels, omitting John's gospel, which is based on the doctrine of the *Logos*. He also quotes from and paraphrases Paul's letters, and is the first known author to quote from the *Acts of the Apostles*.

Kabīr (*c.*1398–1518) One of the best-known Indian Saints *(Sants)*; a Muslim by birth, and a weaver by profession; lived in the Hindu stronghold of Vārāṇasī; linked with the Hindu ascetic, Rāmānand, although the nature of the association is uncertain; a contemporary of the other Indian *Sants*, Guru Nānak and Guru Ravidās.

Details of Kabīr's life are unknown. No one is sure of where or when he was born, where or when he died, whether or not he was married or had children, and so on. Legends, often miraculous, surround his birth, life and death, and both Hindus and Muslims claim him as their own. One legend accords Kabīr a virgin birth. His mother is said to have become pregnant after visiting a Hindu shrine, but since she was unmarried, she abandoned the baby, who was raised by a Muslim weaver.

Kabīr taught the existence of one God to be reached through the practice of His Name *(Nām)*, the central importance of the *Guru*, the reality of transmigration and the law of *karma*, and the equality of all human beings in the eyes of God, regardless of their caste or beliefs. His outspoken attacks on the priestly classes of both Hindus and Muslims outraged them, but reawakened popular interest in the spiritual life. His poetry, written in a vernacular Hindi with little regard to grammar or literary elegance, appeals to the common man, and is notable for its pithy and often amusing condemnation of the follies and external observances of Hindus and Muslims alike. His intention was to get through to a people heavily bogged down in caste, ritual, idolatry and superstition, and believing in asceticism as the path to God. To further emphasize his point – according to legend – when the time came for him to die, he went to Magahar, because it was believed that anyone who died there would be reborn as a donkey.

A selection of his poems is included in the *Ādi Granth*, and his writings are still widely quoted in daily life throughout India, having become a part of folk music and culture. A number of groups have formed around his teachings, of which the largest are the *Kabīrpanthīs*.

Kaivalya Upanishad (S) Belongs, according to the *Muktikā Upanishad*, to the *Yajur Veda;* other authorities say it belongs to the *Atharva Veda; kaivalya* means liberation, beatitude, absolute unity, detachment; a short text, set as the reply by *Brahmā* to Āshvalāyana's request to be taught the science of the highest Reality. Āshvalāyana was the founder of a Vedic school, a teacher of the *Ṛig Veda*.

See also: **Upanishads**.

Kaṭha Upanishad (S) Possibly derived from the name of the sage, Kaṭha, associated with the *Yajur Veda;* generally said to belong to the *Atharva Veda*, but by others to the *Yajur* or *Sāma Vedas;* one of the most readable, and most sublime of the *Upanishads*, held in great esteem by the *Vedānta* school of Indian philosophy; addresses the subject of *Brahman* by means of an illustrative story concerning a young man, Nachiketas, who visits *Yama*, the lord of death. Because *Yama* is away when Nachiketas calls, he offers the young man three boons to compensate for his lack of hospitality. Nachiketas' third boon is a request to know the nature of the *ātman* (self, soul), the answer to which takes up the bulk of the text.

See also: **Upanishads**.

Kaula Jñāna Nirṇaya (S) *Lit.* ascertainment *(nirṇaya)* of *Kaula* knowledge *(jñāna)*, the *Kaulas* being a Tantric group; a mid-eleventh-century (CE)

Tantric work ascribed to the yoga teacher, Matsyendra; the oldest-known source concerning the doctrine of the *Kaulas*.

Kena Upanishad (S) Belonging to the *Sāma Veda*, the name of this short *Upanishad* is taken from the first word *kena* (by whom) of the opening verse in which a disciple asks "by whose" power the mind, the *prāṇa* (subtle life energy), the power of speech, the eyes and ears operate; addresses the subjects of the *ātman* (self, soul) and *Brahman*.

See also: **Upanishads**.

Kephalaia of the Teacher Literally, *kephalaia* means 'of the head', *i.e.* headlines, summaries, topics; a Coptic text, being a translation of Syriac material; part of the Medinet Madi cache of manuscripts found in Egypt around 1930; presents Manichaean teachings using the literary device of Mānī's replies to various questions, much of the text being consequently attributed to Mānī (*c*.216–276) himself; contains both Manichaean teachings, especially concerning Manichaean cosmogony, and a spiritual autobiography of Mānī.

See also: **Mānī and the Manichaeans** (1.8).

Kharaqānī, Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī al- (*c*.960–1033) A Persian Sufi; an illiterate peasant from Kharaqān, a village in the mountains to the north of Bisṭām, in the province of Qūmis; claimed to be the spiritual heir of al-Bisṭāmī (*d.c.*875) through al-Bisṭāmī's spiritual essence *(rūḥānīyat)*, despite the century between them. According to the legend, al-Bisṭāmī is said to have heralded Kharaqānī's ministry, initiating him in a dream after Kharaqānī had made a series of miraculous nightly visits to al-Bisṭāmī's tomb in Bisṭām. A spiritual relationship of this kind, in which the normal requirements of personal contact are absent is commonly designated an *Uwaysī* relationship, referring to the spiritual relationship between Muḥammad and Uways al-Qaranī.

The sayings of Kharaqānī were collected by one of his followers in the *Kitāb Nūr al-'Ulūm* ('Book of Light on the Spiritual Sciences'). In Hujwīrī's, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, Kharaqānī is quoted as saying, "There are two ways, one wrong and one right. The wrong way is man's way to God, and the right way is God's way to man. Whoever says he has attained to God has not attained; but when anyone says that he has been made to attain to God, know that he has really attained" (*KM* p.163). Kharaqānī is also mentioned in 'Aṭṭār's *Tadhkirat al-Awliyā'* ('Memoirs of the Saints'). Among his disciples was Anṣārī of Herāt.

Kiẓẓur Shelah (He) *Lit.* abridgement *(kiẓẓur)* of the *Shelah*, an acronym *(She-La-H)* of *Shenai Lu ot ha-Brit* ('Two Tablets of the Covenant') by Isaiah ben Abraham ha-Levi Horowitz (1565–1630), a rabbi and Kabbalist of Poland; a lengthy and comprehensive work combining Jewish law, essays and Kabbalistic insights aimed at pointing the way towards an ethical life. An abridgement of the *Shelah* was made by Rabbi Yehi'el Mikhal ben Abraham ha-Levi Epstein (*d.*1706) in Germany, in order to educate Jews living in remote isolated villages. Epstein not only abridged Horowitz's original work, but added additional material and a section on the reform of Jewish education. In 1720, the *Kiẓẓur Shelah* was translated into Yiddish under the title *'Eẓ Ḥayyim* ('Tree of Life'), of which numerous editions have been published.

Kṛishṇa One of the most widely revered of the Hindu gods, regarded as an incarnation of *Vishṇu*, and the subject of many devotional works.

See **Kṛishṇa** (4.2).

Kubrá, Najm al-Dīn (*c.*1145–1220) Born in Central Asia; original name, Abū al-Jannāb Aḥmad ibn 'Umar Najm al-Dīn; given the title of *al-Ṭāmma al-Kubrá*, meaning 'the greatest affliction' or 'the major disaster', a nickname earned from his talent for polemic dispute; founder of the *Kubrāwīyah* order of Sufis; travelled widely, eventually returning to Central Asia where he was killed during the Mughul invasion; seventh in the line of succession from al-Junayd; wrote extensive Arabic commentaries on the *Qur'ān*, mystical treatises on the 10 stages for novices, and his most significant work, *Fawā'iḥ al-Jamāl wa Fawātiḥ al-Jalāl* ('Fragrant Breaths of Beauty and the Approaches of Majesty'), in which he describes the visions and ecstasy that a mystic may experience.

K'ŭng Fū Tzu (Kŏng Fū Zi) See **Confucius**.

Lactantius, Lucius Caecilius Firmianus (*c.*240–320) Born somewhere in North Africa; appointed teacher of rhetoric at Nicomedia (now Izmit, in northwest Turkey) by the Roman emperor, Diocletian (ruled 284–305); resigned after Diocletian began persecuting Christians in 303; around 317, appointed tutor to Crispus son of the Emperor Constantine (who had converted to Christianity), at Augusta Treverorum, now Trier, in western Germany, where he died.

Remembered as the author of the first Latin account of Christian principles. In his primary work, *Divinae institutiones* ('Divine Institutes' or 'Divine Precepts'), he refutes early-fourth-century attacks on Christianity, arguing for the superiority of Christian monotheism over the superstitions

of pagan ritualism. In *On the Death of Persecutors*, he maintains that unlike the remote God of the Stoics, the Christian God takes an active part in historical events, intervening on the side of justice. Lactantius therefore proposed that the Christian ideal of universal brotherhood in one divine Father is a better basis for human justice than the Roman concept of *aequitas* (equity). The most-published of the early Latin fathers, Lactantius was more of a moralist than a theologian.

Lāhījī, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyá (*d.*1506) A Sufi, poet and theologian from Lāhījān in the Caspian region of Persia, during the Timurid-Safavid period; a well-known early *Shaykh* of the *Nūrbakhshīyah* Sufi order in Shīrāz, spending 16 years under the spiritual guidance of Sayyid Muḥammad Nūrbakhsh, before founding a *khānaqāh* (monastery for Sufis) after the death of Nūrbakhsh in 1464. Lāhījī's works include a *Dīvān* (collected poems); a didactic *maśnavī, Asrār al-Shuhūd* ('Secrets of Manifestation'); *Mafātiḥ al-I'jāz* ('Keys of Wonder'); and an extensive commentary *(sharḥ)* on the well-known *Gulshan-i Rāz* ('Rose Garden of Mystery') of Maḥmūd-i Shabistarī.

Lamentations One of the five scrolls of the biblical Writings *(Hagiographa);* known in Hebrew as *Eikhah,* meaning 'How' (could it have happened that ...); a poignant lament over the destruction of Jerusalem and the captivity of its people, presumably by the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BCE. The philosophical foundation of the book is the quest for the meaning of suffering; the author or (possibly) authors suggest that suffering can be positive and instructive, having a purpose in the divine plan; uses a 'proverbs' style in many places, having significant similarities to biblical Wisdom literature. The traditional ascription of the work to the seventh-century (BCE) prophet, Jeremiah, who lived before Nebuchadnezzar's sack of Jerusalem, seems unlikely.

Lǎo Tzu (Lao Zi) (*c.*604–531 BCE) Probably the best-known and most revered figure of Taoism, believed to have been born around 600 BCE.

See **Taoism** (1.14).

Legends of the Jews A work by Louis Ginzberg (1873–1953), in 7 volumes (1909–38); a synthesis of legends, maxims and parables taken from the entire midrashic literature, and moulded into a continuous narrative of the lives of the major biblical personalities. While exploring the origins of *aggadah* (rabbinic narrative and legend), Ginzberg researched many non-canonical and early Christian sources for lost legends of Jewish origin, which he collected together in these volumes.

Leonard Crow Dog (*b.*1942) A twentieth-century Lakota (Sioux) Native American; son of Henry Crow Dog; the fourth generation to carry the Crow Dog name, claiming that he can trace his Crow Dog ancestry for nine generations.

See **Some Recent Native Americans** (1.14).

Leviticus See **Pentateuch**.

Lièh Tzu (Liè Zi) A Taoist philosopher, frequently mentioned in the *Chuāng Tzu*, of uncertain date. Little is known about Lièh Tzu except the book that bears his name, the *Book of Lièh Tzu* or simply the *Lièh Tzu*. Like Lăo Tzu, there is some doubt as to his actual existence. Lièh Tzu's teachings, like Chuāng Tzu's, use parables, ancient folk tales and myths to elaborate the short, often cryptic passages of Lăo Tzu's *Tào Té Chīng*.

Longinus, Cassius (*c.*213–273 CE) A Greek rhetorician and philosopher; taught rhetoric at Athens, the Neo-Platonist, Porphyry, being one of his pupils; later, a counsellor to Queen Zenobia of Palmyra, in central Syria, but handed over to the Romans for execution as a traitor on the failure of the anti-Roman policy he advocated; also attended the lectures of the philosopher-mystic, Ammonius Saccas. A man of great learning, Longinus was described by Porphyry as the "first among critics"; by the Greek rhetorician and historian, Eunapius (*c.*345–420), as "a living library and a walking encyclopaedia"; and by Plotinus as "a scholar, but not a philosopher". He is said to have been a prolific writer, though only fragments of his writings have survived. He has sometimes been confused with the first-century (CE) Dionysius Longinus, author of *On the Sublime*, a Greek treatise on literary criticism.

Luis de León (1527–91) Born at Belmonte, in Cuenca Province, in east central Spain; a brilliant monk, mystic and poet; joined the Augustines around 1543; educated largely at the University of Salamanca, studying theology, where he was appointed professor of theology in 1561; denounced to the Inquisition by rival academics (Dominicans) in which a number of issues were raised, including the fact that his great-grandmother had been Jewish, but especially his translation of the *Song of Solomon* from Hebrew into Spanish, together with commentary, in which he criticized the Latin translation of the *Vulgate;* arrested in 1572, spending four or five years in gaol in Valladolid, vigorously defending himself before being acquitted, with cautions and reprimands, in 1576; given a new professorship at the University, where he is reputed to have begun his opening lecture with the words, "As we were saying yesterday, ..."; continued various bitter rivalries with academic colleagues, not only Dominicans; survived an unsuccessful second denun-

ciation in 1582, receiving the customary caution. Throughout his academic career, Luis maintained an ascetic discipline of fasts, all-night vigils and other austerities, writing of life in the body as "this dark, low prison-house". He died in 1591 at Madrigal de las Altas.

Knowledgeable in Hebrew, Greek, Latin and Italian, as well as his native Spanish, Luis' written works are a major contribution to Spanish Renaissance literature. He was a vigorous defender of his own vernacular tongue against Latin, often using it in his writings when others would have used Latin. His works encompass translations and commentaries of biblical texts, including the *Song of Solomon*, the *Book of Job*, and some of the psalms; various theological treatises, including *De los nombres de Cristo* ('On the Names of Christ') (1583–85), described as his prose masterpiece, full of lyrical imagery concerning the many epithets used for Christ, such as the Shepherd, King, Beloved, Son of God and so on; a collection of lyric poetry, regarded by many as comparable in quality to that of John of the Cross; and *La perfecta casada* (*The Perfect Married Woman*, 1583), a commentary in Spanish on *Proverbs* 31 (an acrostic that begins "The perfect wife – who can find her?"), which reflects medieval attitudes towards women, and contains entertaining glimpses of feminine customs of the period.

Luke, Gospel According to St The New Testament gospel attributed to Luke; addressed in its opening verses to "most excellent Theophilus", though who he was or whether he was a literary invention is unknown. Although ascribed from at least the late second century (in the Muratorian Canon) to Luke the physician, the companion of Paul mentioned in Paul's letters, there is no reliable historical record of who really wrote this gospel. Moreover, the gospel is not markedly Pauline in content. Like Mark and Matthew, the message is eschatological, as are Paul's letters, but there are also some differences between Luke and Paul's versions of the Second Coming. The destruction of the Temple at Jerusalem (70 CE) is mentioned in a prophecy concerning the Second Coming (21:5–6, 20), and a suggested date of authorship of around 80 CE is commonly accepted. It is generally presumed to have been written by a non-Jew, living outside Palestine, because (like Mark) the author's knowledge of Palestinian geography is sometimes inaccurate.

Luke's gospel is comprised of about 30 percent Mark (about half of Mark), 20 percent *Q* (the source of Jesus' sayings common to Matthew and Luke), and 50 percent from unique sources. The unique material includes parables such as the good Samaritan, the prodigal son, the lost coin, and the rich fool; the nativity and infancy stories concerning John the Baptist and Jesus; additions to the passion, crucifixion and resurrection narratives; and the story of the ascension, which only occurs in this gospel. Luke also includes three otherwise unknown psalms, the *Magnificat*, the *Benedictus*

and the *Nunc Dimittis*, which are similar in style to the biblical psalms or the *Thanksgiving Hymns* from the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Though somewhat hampered by the style of his sources, the Greek of Luke's own writing is excellent, often consciously mirroring the *Septuagint* (the Greek translation of the Old Testament). Frequently, he improves Mark's rough Greek, or makes various minor adjustments for one reason or another. Things that might cause offence are toned down or omitted, such as the injunction in Mark to cut off your hand or pluck out your eye if they become the source of temptation (*Mark* 9:43–48). Some scholars have maintained that Luke was writing, at least in part, for the attention of the Roman authorities, to present Christianity as a harmless faith, and thus to prevent or stop persecution. Whether this is correct is uncertain. It is true, however, that Luke's editorial process involves removing or softening incidents that may be construed as a cause of civil disturbance. A discourse common to Matthew and Luke, for instance, in which Jesus berates the Pharisees, is greatly softened and truncated in Luke (*Luke* 11:37*ff.*, *Matthew* 23:1*ff.*). Luke's viewpoint also presumes a divine purpose in the unfolding of history, depicting the Church as the instrument of salvation in the period between Christ's ministry and the Second Coming. Although his narrative sources are largely legendary, his gospel is written as a history, something which becomes even clearer in the second part of his work, the *Acts of the Apostles*.

See also: **Acts of the Apostles**, **Jesus' Teaching in the Gospels** (1.5), **The Synoptic Gospels** (1.5).

Madhva (*c.*1197–1276) Also called Madhvāchārya; born into a *brāhmaṇ* family, at Rajatapīṭha (probably modern Kalyāṇpur), near Uḍipi, Karnataka, in India; initiated by Achyutapreksha (whom Madhva is said to have ultimately converted to his own doctrines), and received the name Pūrṇaprājña and, later, Ānandatīrtha; one of the principal *āchāryas* or exponents of *Vedānta,* holding the view that the self and God are two different entities; his school is thus called dualistic or *Dvaita Vedānta;* his followers are known as *Mādhvas.*

Madhva travelled extensively, first in South India, where he established himself as the leader of a new faith, and then in North India. In support of his doctrines, he debated vigorously with exponents of other Indian philosophies, especially the followers of Shankara's non-dualist school, *Advaita Vedānta.* There was a well-known Shankarite *maṭha* (monastery) at Shṛingeri, 40 miles west of Uḍipi, which he visited, engaging the monks in heated discussion.

Shankara (*c.*788–820) took the traditional Indian view that only *Brahman,* the divine Absolute, is real; the material world and the ego or individual self are an illusion *(māyā).* Madhva maintained that because things

are transient does not mean they are unreal. Contrary to traditional Hindu thought, he believed in eternal salvation or damnation in heaven or hell. To this, he added the Hindu belief in reincarnation and transmigration as an endless purgatory for souls. He held that knowledge is relative, not absolute. As a religious leader, he banned temple prostitution, and substituted dough models for blood sacrifices. His followers characteristically branded themselves on the shoulder with a many-armed image of *Vishṇu.*

Madhva may have been influenced early in his life by a community of Nestorian Christians living in Kalyāṇpur. A number of miracles attributed to him have clearly been borrowed from the Christian gospels, and his philosophy contains elements of both orthodox and gnostic Christianity. As a young man, his parents discovered him after a four-day search, in earnest and learned conversation with the priests of *Vishṇu;* on a pilgrimage to Vārāṇasī, he is said to have walked on water, calmed a storm, fed the multitude with a few loaves of bread, and to have become a 'fisher of men'.

Thirty-seven Sanskrit works are attributed to Madhva, the majority being commentaries on Hindu scriptures and treatises on his own philosophical system.

Madhyamaka Kārikā See **Nāgārjuna**.

Maghribī, Mullā Muḥammad Shīrīn (*d.c.* 1408) Full name, Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn 'Izz al-Dīn ibn 'Ādil ibn Yūsuf Tabrīzī; born in the village of Ammand, near Lake Urūmiya, in northwestern Iran; one of the most significant Persian Sufi poets of the school of Ibn 'Arabī, whose most prevalent themes are *waḥdat al-wujūd* (unity of being) and the ecstasy of contemplation. Although associated with a number of Sufi schools, his principal *Shaykh* was the Kubrāwī Sufi, Ismā'īl Sīsī.

A writer in both Arabic and Persian, his best-known work is his *Dīvān* (collected verses). His writing is influenced by Shabistarī and Sa'īd al-Dīn Farqānī, and in turn influenced Shāh Ni'mat Allāh Valī and Muḥammad Lāhījī. A number of images and expressions from his poetry have become Persian proverbs, and his literary influence remains, even in present times.

Mahābhārata (S) The great *(mahā)* epic of the Bharata dynasty; an epic saga of ancient Indian history, legend and mythology, traditionally ascribed to the sage Vyāsa, whose central story is the struggle for supremacy between two groups of cousins, the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas, and tells of the friendship and guidance offered by Kṛishṇa to the Pāṇḍavas; a major source of information concerning the development in Hinduism from about 400 BCE to 200 CE.

The conflict arises because the younger of two princes, Pāṇḍu, is made king in preference to his elder brother, Dhṛitarāshṭra, because of Dhṛitarāshṭra's

blindness. Pāṇḍu later passes over the kingdom to Dhṛitarāshṭra, to live the life of a hermit in the forest. Each brother has five sons, the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas, who grow up together in the palace. A seething jealousy develops between the two groups, and when Pāṇḍu dies, the Pāṇḍavas are forced out of the palace to live in the forest. There they jointly marry Draupadi and meet Kṛishṇa, who becomes their friend and guide. Some while later, they return to rule over a divided kingdom, but have to leave once more when the elder brother, Yudhishṭhira, loses everything in a game of dice with the eldest Kaurava. The story develops and culminates in a series of battles in which the only survivors are Kṛishṇa and the five Pāṇḍavas. Kṛishṇa is killed by a hunter who mistakes him for a deer, and the Pāṇḍavas, along with Draupadi and a dog who has joined them (the goddess of *dharma* in disguise) set out for *Indra*'s heaven. With the exception of Yudhishṭhira, all are killed on the way, but when he eventually reaches paradise, after further tests of his steadfastness, he is reunited with Draupadi and his five brothers.

This story itself, which may have once been a separate poem, constitutes somewhat less than a quarter of the entire work. Between its various episodes are interwoven a multitude of other tales, myths and legends, along with descriptions of holy places, discussions concerning the ages of the universe, and so on. It is a compendium of Hindu lore, built up over a period spanning almost a millennium.

The over 90,000 couplets of the *Mahābhārata* (more than twice the size of Rūmī's *Maśnavī,* and more than seven times that of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* combined) are divided into 18 *parvans* (books). The fourth book, for instance, the *Virāṭaparvan,* describes the adventures of the Pāṇḍavas while in the service of the king Virāṭa. The sixth book, the *Bhīshmaparvan,* contains the *Bhagavad Gītā.* The twelfth book, *Shāntiparvan* ('Book of Peace'), deals with *rājadharma,* the *dharma* of a king. The thirteenth book, the *Anushāsanaparvan* ('Book of Precepts'), deals with the governance of a state. The underlying message throughout is essentially that of *dharma* (duties, moral law, way of life).

The battle that forms the central event of the story is traditionally dated to the twelfth or thirteenth century BCE, although some scholars suggest a later date, while some traditionalists place it in the fourth millennium BCE. The date of composition, probably building on earlier material, is very uncertain, but is believed to have been already well established by the time of the Buddha, in the fifth and sixth centuries BCE. Additions and modifications are estimated to have taken place up to the fifth or sixth century CE, after which the bulk of the work is thought to have remained the same.

Like the other great Hindu epic, the *Rāmāyaṇa,* the impact of the story on Indian culture can hardly be underestimated. The *Mahābhārata* is also popular throughout South and Southeast Asia, where stone carvings of scenes from the story have been found as far away as Cambodia and Indonesia.

See also: **The Rāmāyaṇa, the Mahābhārata and the Bhagavad Gītā** (1.11).

Mahāparinibbāna Sutta (Pa), **Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra** (S) *Lit.* The *sutta* (Pa) or *sūtra* (S) of the great *(mahā)* liberation (Pa. *nibbāna*, S. *nirvāṇa*); a Buddhist *sūtra* from the Pali texts that relates the Buddha's activities and teaching during his last year of life, and describes his death, also glorifying the eternal, personal and sublime nature of *nirvāṇa*.

See also: **Buddhism** (1.12).

Mahārāj Sāwan Singh See **Sāwan Singh, Mahārāj**.

Mahā Upanishad (S) *Lit.* the great *(mahā) Upanishad;* belonging to the *Sāma Veda;* a short text describing the creation of the universe at the start of every age from the self-existent *Nārāyaṇa;* then proceeds to deal with the various other aspects of spiritual knowledge in the form of two dialogues, one between King Janaka and Shukadeva and the other between sage Ṛibhu and his son Nidōrgha; partially derived from the *Mahānārāyaṇa* and *Artharvashira Upanishads.*

See also: **Upanishads**.

Maitreya Upanishad (S) Belonging to the *Sāma Veda;* clearly related to the *Maitrī Upanishad* of the *Yajur Veda,* though the texts differ in many places.

See also: **Maitrī Upanishad**.

Maitrī Upanishad (S) Belonging to the *Yajur Veda,* although some attribute it to the *Sāma Veda;* takes its name from its principal teacher, Maitri; contains seven chapters, the last two being more recent than the remainder; written later than the classical *Upanishads,* which it quotes frequently; refers to the *trimūrti* (three-formed) conception of *Brahmā, Vishṇu* and *Shiva,* linking them to the three *guṇas* (attributes).

See also: **Upanishads**.

Majjhima Nikāya (Pa) *Lit.* medium *(majjhima)* collection *(nikāya);* a collection of 152 medium-length *sūtras* (S) or *suttas* (Pa) in Pali, largely attributed to the Buddha, although some are ascribed to his disciples, covering many aspects of Buddhist thought, including meditation, monastic life, problems associated with asceticism, the evils of caste, Buddha's discussion with the Jains, many myths and stories, and the fundamentals of Buddhist doctrine;

one of the five collections *(nikāyas)* of texts comprising the *Suttapiṭaka* ('Basket of Discourses'), the extensive body of texts constituting one of the *Tripiṭakas* ('Three Baskets') that make up the Pali canon of *Theravāda* Buddhism.

See also: **Buddhism** (1.12).

Malachi The biblical book of Malachi, the last of the twelve 'minor prophets'; probably composed *c.*500 BCE, the main themes being a condemnation of corrupt religious, moral and social behaviour, and a reiteration of the need to restore the Israelites' relationship with God. Malachi is a contracted form of 'my messenger', the identity of this prophet being unknown.

Malūkdās (1631–1739) An Indian Saint *Sant);* born in the village of Kaṛā, in the district of Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh, who taught the path of the mystic Name of God; the author of many books, of which *Ratnakhān* ('Mine of Jewels') and *Gyānbodha* ('Knowledge and Enlightenment') are the best known; an initiate of the South Indian, Viṭṭhaldās.

Mandaean Ginzā Full name, *Ginzā Rba* ('Great Treasure'), *ginzā* meaning 'treasure', 'mystery' or 'sacrament'; a miscellany of Mandaean sacred texts.

Mandaean John-Book A Mandaean text containing a number of gnostic allegories, including the *Fisher of Souls,* together with historical sections relating Mandaean beliefs concerning John the Baptist (Md. Yōhānā, A. Yaḥyá), and the story of the original Mandaeans' persecution by the Jews, their breach with Judaism, and their journey to the banks of the Euphrates.

Mandaean Prayer Book The 'canonical' collection of Mandaean prayers, used for centuries by Mandaean priests, and given to E.S. Drower in 1954 by a Mandaean head priest.

Māṇḍūkya Kārikā (S) See **Gauḍapāda**.

Māṇḍūkya Upanishad (S) Belonging to the *Atharva Veda;* probably named after its writer; a short text describing everything as a manifestation of the creative syllable, *Om,* or *Brahman,* including the span of human consciousness, from deep sleep to superconsciousness; one of the most important and earliest expressions of inward-looking mysticism, written with an emphasis on turning within the self *(ātman)* to find the sublime peace and oneness of the highest Consciousness and Reality.

See also: **Upanishads**.

Mānī (*c.*216–276) A third-century Iranian mystic, in whose name the Manichaean religion was founded.

See **Mānī and the Manichaeans** (1.8).

Manichaean Homilies A collection of Manichaean discourses in Coptic, which include a description of the last journey of Mānī (*c.*216–276) and his execution by Bahrām; according to ancient lists of such texts, a great many more homilies once existed than the few now preserved.

Manichaean Hymns Texts discovered by four German expeditions (1902–14) to the ruins of the ancient towns on the borders of the Takla Makan desert in Chinese Turkestan, Central Asia, 500 miles or so to the north of Afghanistan and far to the west of the Gobi desert. Manuscripts of many kinds were found in 17 languages, the most significant Manichaean hymns being in Parthian and Chinese.

See also: **Mānī and the Manichaeans** (1.8).

Manichaean Psalm Book A Coptic psalm book, found by Professor Carl Schmidt in 1930 in the bazaars of Cairo, probably dating from the fourth century; part of the Medinet Madi cache of manuscripts; includes translations and versions of material that may have originated at a much earlier date; contains devotional writings of a mystic nature praising both Mānī (*c.*216–276) and Jesus as mystic Saviours, often in the same psalm; includes a collection called the *Psalms of Heracleidēs* and another, the *Psalms of Thomas,* the latter being a translation of earlier Mandaean hymns.

See also: **Mānī and the Manichaeans** (1.8).

Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj See **Ḥallāj, Manṣūr al-**

Manu The first man, in Indian mythology; from the Sanskrit *man* (to think); the mythological author of the code of law known as the *Manu Smṛiti;* the performer of the first Vedic sacrifice; also, the first king, to whom most dynasties of medieval India traced their descent, through Manu's son or daughter. In a myth with obvious biblical parallels, the *Shatapatha Brāhmaṇa* relates how Manu is warned by a fish of an impending flood that will destroy humanity. Manu therefore builds a boat, and when the flood comes, ties it to the horn of the fish, and is so steered to safety on a mountaintop. When the flood recedes, finding himself the sole survivor, Manu gives thanks. He performs a sacrifice, pouring an oblation of sour milk and butter onto the waters. A year later, a woman is born from the waters who announces

herself as his daughter. Together, they become the ancestors of all humankind, repopulating the earth. In the *Mahābhārata*, the fish is said to be *Brahmā*, while in the *Purāṇas*, the fish is identified as *Matsya*, the fish-incarnation of *Vishṇu*.

In the cosmological mythology of the *Purāṇas*, the universe undergoes periodic dissolution and recreation over vast spans of time. Accounts vary, but in one such story, a new Manu appears at the start of every recreation, to repopulate the earth. Presently, we are said to be in the seventh such cycle of the current age.

See also: **pralaya** (5.2).

Manu Smṛiti (S) *Lit.* the tradition of Manu, the law-book of Manu; a Sanskrit text attributed to the legendary first man, Manu; the popular name of the *Mānava-Dharma-Shāstra*, also called the *Manu Saṃhitā;* dates in its current form from the first century BCE; regarded as the most authoritative description of the *Dharma-Shāstra*, the traditional Hindu social code, describing the *dharma* (way of life) prescribed for the four principal Indian castes in each of the four stages *(āshramas)* of life. Throughout the text, no particular distinction is made between secular and religious affairs. In its 2,694 stanzas, spanning 12 chapters, it defines *dharma*, and covers such topics as sacraments, initiation, Vedic study, marriage, hospitality, funeral rites, diet, pollution and ritual purification, the conduct of women and wives, the *dharma* of kings, legal matters, charitable donations, compensation, *karma*, the soul, and hell. The text has influenced every aspect of Hindu life, and has provided a social framework and code of morality that has lasted more than 2,000 years.

See also: **Manu**.

Marina de Escobar (1554–1633) Born at Valladolid, Spain; daughter of Margaret Montana, daughter of Charles V's physician, and Iago de Escobar, a professor of civil and Roman Catholic law, one time governor of Osuna, and noted for his devout life; an able scholar, showing a contemplative nature even in youth; devoted herself to her own spiritual perfection until her 45th year, after which she gave her attention to the spiritual advancement of others; became bedridden at the age of 50, for the rest of her life.

Marina received a revelation that she should found a branch of the Order of the Holy Saviour (the Brigittines), with rules modified to suit her times and country. But she also knew that she would not live to see the work fully accomplished. She was the recipient of many other revelations, visions and mystic experiences, which she wrote down, she believed, by divine command, and when too infirm, dictated. Her spiritual guide and confessor, the

Jesuit and writer, Luis de la Puente (1554–1624), collected and arranged them for publication after her death, together with observations of his own and an unfinished biography of her life. He writes in the preface that he believes in their genuineness because of her piety, purity, lack of pride, peace in prayer and obedience to her confessor.

Her work, divided into six books, was published in one volume. She writes freely, with simplicity and frankness, of her great variety of visions concerning God and the Trinity, the mysteries of redemption, guardian angels, the Virgin Mary, ways to help souls on earth and in purgatory, mystic espousals, the vision of saints, internal stigmata, and so on. Her visions were always instructive and picturesque, though enjoyable or frightening, according to their content.

Mark, Gospel According to St The New Testament gospel attributed to John Mark (*Acts* 12:12, 15:37), an associate of Paul and disciple of Peter.

See **The Synoptic Gospels** (1.5).

Marsanēs A poorly preserved, gnostic text from the Coptic Nag Hammadi codices, lacking evidence of any Christian influence, and probably written during the third century; an apocalypse addressed to initiates of an unknown gnostic community, possibly Sethian, and attributed in the text – probably pseudo-epigraphically – to Marsanēs, a gnostic prophet; purports to relate the visions and revelations of the soul on its ascent into heavenly realms, and ultimately to the "unknown Silent One"; explains the esoteric meaning of the letters of the alphabet, and their relationship both to the soul and to the gods and angels of the heavenly regions; contains evidence of an underlying theurgy, in which the gods were invoked by means of ritual to assist the soul's ascent; includes encouragement to seekers of God.

Massekhet Hekhalot (He) *Lit.* the chariot *(hekhalot)* treatise *(massekhet);* also called the *Workings of the Chariot;* one of a body of literature produced in the post-biblical rabbinic period that describes the inner journey taken by some of the rabbis of the *Talmud,* and their vision of the divine throne and chariot, the chariot being both the vehicle for the inner travel and the throne itself.

Matthew, Gospel According to St The New Testament gospel attributed to Jesus' disciple, Matthew the tax collector; arranged in seven major sections, starting with the nativity and infancy stories, followed by five main blocks of Jesus' sayings with associated narrative material, and ending with the passion, crucifixion and resurrection narratives. Matthew's gospel is sometimes called the Jewish gospel, because of the evident Jewish background

of the compiler. There are 11 instances, for example, where he arranges his material, so as to lead into the formula, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, ...", at which point he quotes a messianic prophecy from the Old Testament. However, the gospel is generally regarded as being aimed at Gentiles, rather than Jews, and is commonly thought to have been written at Antioch or some other early centre of Eastern Christianity.

Matthew was long regarded as the earliest gospel, although studies over the last 150 years have made it clear that the compiler of Matthew has copied from Mark, which is now regarded as the earliest gospel. Matthew's gospel mentions the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple in a prophecy concerning the Second Coming and the end of the world (24:1*ff.*). The Romans entered Jerusalem in 70 CE, so the date of composition is generally set between 80 and 95 CE.

See also: **Jesus' Teaching in the Gospels** (1.5), **The Synoptic Gospels** (1.5).

Maximos the Confessor (*c.*580–662) Born in Constantinople to an aristocratic family; received an excellent education; entered the civil service in the court of the eastern Roman emperor, Heraclius I (ruled 610–641), perhaps as his secretary; joined the monastery of Philippikos in Chrysopolis (now Üsküdar), near Constantinople on the Black Sea (*c.*614); took refuge from the Persian invasion of 626, first in Crete, and later in North Africa.

The author of over 90 works, Maximos was a prolific writer and a creative thinker, the most influential theologian of the Eastern Church of his time. This got him into serious difficulties with the authorities. From 633–634 onwards, he was involved in a theological controversy over the divine and human natures of Christ. Accepting the established doctrine that the two natures were distinct in the one person of Christ, he disagreed with the Monothelite contention (ultimately deemed heretical) that the two natures acted under only one divine will. Maximos supported a dual-will hypothesis, arguing that a human nature without a human will made no sense, and was an unreal abstraction. He was arrested by the imperial authorities in 653, sent to Constantinople for trial, and exiled. Subjected to further accusations, trials and condemnations, in 662, he was flogged, his tongue cut out, and his right hand cut off, presumably to prevent him speaking and writing 'heresy'. Sent once more into exile, he died shortly afterwards in the Caucasus.

The commentaries of Maximos on the mystical theology of Dionysius the Areopagite and the Greek fathers remained influential into medieval times. In the *Philokalia*, his writings occupy more space than any other, and he is frequently quoted by the later Orthodox fathers. Teaching both

mystical theology as well as the monastic and ascetic way, he sought a practical balance between asceticism and a charitably disposed everyday life.

Mechthild of Magdeburg (*c.*1210–97) A Christian mystic; born into a noble family in Saxony, north Germany; raised as a Christian but with no particularly religious leanings until, at the age of 12, she "was greeted by the Holy Ghost", an experience which was repeated daily thereafter, and following which "she could no longer give way to serious daily sins"; left her loving home in her early twenties to become a Beguine at Magdeburg, where she had only one friend (whom she avoided), desiring to renounce the world; led a life of prayer and mortification, under the spiritual guidance of the Dominicans.

At Magdeburg, her inspirations and ecstatic visions became more frequent, dispelling all doubt from her confessor's mind as to their validity and divine origin. Soon after her arrival she had her first experience of God and Jesus, which she describes as "such sweetness of love, such heavenly knowledge, such inconceivable wonders". Feeling compelled to write of her experiences, yet engulfed by the shame of her own unworthiness, she was encouraged by her friend and probably spiritual director, the Dominican, Heinrich von Halle, Lector of Neu-Ruppin. She recorded her visions on loose sheets of paper.

Mechthild probably lived at the Convent of St Agnes where it is possible she was Abbess from 1273. Both Church and State, however, were in a state of decadence at the time, and Mechthild's outspoken denunciation of them, especially of the clergy, resulted in her persecution. Charged with being unlearned, lay and (even worse) a woman, with even her own Sisters finding her ideals too high, she finally moved to the Cistercian Convent of Helfde in Saxony, probably around 1285. Here, with Mechthild of Hackeborn and the Abbess Gertrude, both writers and visionaries, she found a sympathetic welcome and true understanding in a convent with a reputation as a mystical centre. Despite failing health and eyesight, she felt inspired by God to write once more of her experiences, which she dictated to the nuns.

Mechthild's entire work is generally known as *The Flowing Light of the Godhead.* She wrote in her own dialect of Low German, handing over the loose sheets to Heinrich von Halle. He then rearranged them into chapters, by subject, according to his own ideas. He also translated them into Latin, and at the same time, "cut, smoothed and softened" them, presumably losing some of their original force. Mechthild's original manuscript no longer exists, and it is largely from the work of von Halle and a later High German translation (1344) that her life and visions are known. The material written at Helfde, together with many earlier sheets, was added to the book after the death of both Mechthild and von Halle.

Mechthild's writing is forceful, flowery, expressive of her feelings, and often interspersed with her own beautiful poetry. Sometimes, it is difficult to know how much of her visions have been augmented by her own imagination. Her descriptions of hell, for instance, are particularly detailed and graphic. There is some reason to believe that this part of her work provided inspiration for Dante's *Divine Comedy*.

Micah A biblical text concerning the late-eighth-century (BCE), Micah, one of the twelve 'minor prophets'; a possible contemporary of Isaiah, sharing elements of his teaching, even echoing his language; offers a message of consolation concerning the love of God for his people, despite the punishment they have had to undergo as a result of their misdeeds; teaches the supremacy of mercy and compassion over sacrifice and ritual; remembered for the verse: "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (*Micah* 6:8, *KJV*).

Midrash (He/Ar) (pl. *midrashim*) A genre of rabbinic literature consisting of interpretations of biblical texts, written during three main periods: the third to sixth centuries CE in Babylonia and Palestine was the origin of the early or classical *midrashim, e.g. Genesis Rabbah;* the middle period, after the Muslim conquest, saw the influence of pseudo-epigraphic and apocalyptic literature, and works by individual authors, such as *Midrash Tanḥuma;* the eleventh and twelfth centuries, when later *midrashim* were written.

Midrash Rabbah (He/Ar) Rabbinic interpretations of biblical texts, events and stories, which follow the structure of the biblical narrative. There is a *Midrash Rabbah* for each of the five books of the *Pentateuch,* as well as for the five scrolls *(Ruth, Song of Songs, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes* and *Esther).* These *midrashim* were actually written at different times, beginning in the third century CE, but the name *Rabbah* was attached to all of them when they were published together in 1545, in Venice, Italy.

Midrash Tanḥuma (He) A well-known collection of *midrashim* on the *Pentateuch,* edited in the ninth or tenth centuries; attributed to Rabbi Tanḥuma.

Milton, John (1608–74) An English poet and prolific writer; the son of a wealthy, self-made father (a notary and moneylender) who had been disinherited by his own father for turning from Catholicism to Protestantism; educated first at St Paul's School, London, where he studied Latin, Greek and Hebrew, and by private tutors at home, probably including modern languages; admitted to Christ's College, Cambridge, in 1625, where he was nicknamed "The Lady" for his refined features and a purity of mind that

disdained the coarser pursuits of his fellows. From this early period of his life until the 1630s, he wrote a considerable volume of Latin and English verse, though he was little recognized at the time. These early works reflect the thinking of a young Renaissance humanist who was also a Christian and a Platonist.

In the early 1940s, Milton largely put aside his poetic aspirations to address the religious, social and political issues of his time. He became a passionate supporter of the Parliamentary cause during the Civil War (culminating in the execution of Charles I in 1649). Much of his literary output during this period (1641–60) consists of pamphlets in support of religious and civil liberties. Included among these were a plea for the return to the democratic simplicity of the early apostolic Church, freedom of the press, and the right of divorce on grounds other than adultery, the latter stemming from his own unhappy marriage.

Milton is particularly remembered for his epic poems, *Paradise Lost* (1667, rev. 1674), *Paradise Regained* (1671) and his verse drama, *Samson Agonistes* (1671), all three written in blank verse during the latter period of his life. *Paradise Lost* relates a much elaborated version of the story of Satan's rebellion against God, his expulsion from heaven, and the subsequent events with Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. In *Paradise Regained,* Christ, as the second Adam, regains for man what the original Adam had lost. *Samson Agonistes* tells the story of the last days of the biblical Samson. These poems express a purified faith in God and the spiritual strength of the individual, rather than the political and socials matters which had earlier concerned him. Blind in his later years, Milton's epic poems were composed in his head, often at night, and dictated during the day to assistants, family members, friends or students, frequently with one leg flung over the arm of his chair.

Born into low-church Anglicanism, he moved to Presbyterianism, then to Independency (believing in the right of local churches to self-government), and finally to personal independence of all churches. Of his personal spiritual life, Samuel Johnson observed, "His studies and meditations were an habitual prayer." He died (according to his early biographer, John Toland) "of the gout stuck in", just before his sixty-sixth birthday,

Mīrābāī (*c.*1498–1547) A Rajput princess, whose songs of devotion and longing are still popular throughout India; born in Mertā, a powerful independent state in Rajasthan. Surrounded by legends, often miraculous, little is actually known of her life. Rajasthani chroniclers of the period either fail to mention her, or mention her only in passing. Without her songs, she would soon have been forgotten. Only by piecing together the few autobiographical comments in her songs with traditional legends and the recorded history of period, does a sketch of her life emerge.

Mīrā was the daughter of Rāo Ratna Singh, the ruler of Jodhpur, one of the younger sons of the veteran warrior, Rāo Dūda, ruler of Mertā. Her mother died when she was barely two years old, and she was raised at her grandfather's court in Mertā. Rāo Dūda possessed a devotional bent of mind, and holy men, whom Mīrā would have met, were welcome at his palace. Her education would have included knowledge of the scriptures, music, spinning and sewing, along with archery, fencing, horse-riding and charioteering. She is reputed to have grown up into a soft-spoken, affectionate, charitable and extraordinarily beautiful princess.

Hearing of her qualities and accomplishments, Rāṇā Sangā Singh, the powerful king of Mewāṛ, sought her hand in marriage for his eldest son and heir, Prince Bhojrāj. Shortly after the engagement, Rāo Dūda died. Nevertheless, at the age of 18, Mīrā was married, and was welcomed into her new home at the fort of Chittor, with much rejoicing, destined, it was believed, to be the next queen. The next few years passed peacefully. But five or ten years after their marriage, her husband was killed in battle, followed shortly after by the death of her father in the battle against the Mughul invader, Bābur. Her father-in-law, Rāṇā Sangā, was wounded in the same fight, and was poisoned a few month later in a court intrigue. The year was 1527. Mīrā was around the age of 30.

In her childhood and youth, Mīrā had been a devotee of Kṛishṇa. At some point, however, she had become a disciple of Ravidās, a low-caste cobbler Saint, whom she mentions in her songs, and whom – she says – she visited daily whenever he was in Chittor. However, the new Rāṇā of Mewāṛ, Rāṇā Ratna Singh, her husband's younger brother, was unsympathetic to Mīrā's spiritual life. Her father, grandfather, father-in-law and husband were no longer there to support her. Her association with a low-caste cobbler and her singing of devotional songs with other devotees, regardless of their caste were considered scandalous by the orthodox *brāhmaṇs* and other people of Chittor. Rāṇā Ratna Singh therefore began to persecute Mīrā, assisted by his cousin Ūdābāī, who hated her.

Various miracle stories are related of this period. On one occasion, hearing Mīrā talking in her room, Ūdā believed her to be with a man. Calling the Rāṇā, they ran to the room, but when the Rāṇā burst in with drawn sword, they found Mīrā lost in ecstasy. She had been talking to her Lord, and her radiance filled the room. The Rāṇā was disconcerted, and left. Ūdā realized her mistake, and ultimately became a devotee. Two other ladies sent by the Rāṇā to 'bring Mīrā round' met the same fate as Ūdā.

In 1531, Rāṇā Ratna Singh was killed, a victim of his own plot to murder his maternal uncle. His successor, Rāṇā Vikram was worse than his predecessor. He tried to kill her. According to the legend, he sent Mīrā a cup of poison, which he insisted was *charaṇamṛit* (*lit.* nectar of the feet, water or syrup blessed by a Saint or used to wash the feet of temple idols).

Mīrā had been forewarned of the plot, but is said to have drunk the poison all the same, with no ill effects. On another occasion, she was sent a poisonous snake in a casket, but on arrival, the snake had become a string of pearls. Mīrā mentions these incidents in her songs, which – working backwards – were probably the source of the embellished legends. But she was always forgiving, never vindictive. In one of her songs, she sings, "Why do you want to kill me, O Rāṇā? I have never harmed you, nor have I done any wrong."

By this time, Mīrā had become well known for her devotion and for her songs, and she received many visitors, which must have further enraged the Rāṇā. Finally, however, she left the court, in 1534. A few months later, the fort was taken by Bahādur Shāh, *sulṭān* of Gujarat, and although Rāṇā Vikram made good his escape, most of the inhabitants died in the fight. Mīrā went to her uncle's home in Mertā, where she was warmly welcomed. But her songs denouncing the priestly class and religious rituals were by now so popular that to avoid embarrassing her uncle, she quietly left Mertā.

Little is known of her life after that. Now in her mid- to late-thirties, she is believed to have visited Vṛindāvan, a place of pilgrimage and a *brāhmaṇ* stronghold, before making her way to Dvārka, in Gujarat, in search of her Ravidās, who had many disciples there. She is believed to have stayed in Gujarat for some time, where she composed a great many songs in Gujarati, and is regarded as one of the finest devotional poets in Gujarati literature.

Meanwhile, back in Chittor, the once powerful state had been reduced to a small principality. Rāṇā Ratna Singh and Rāṇā Vikram had both met violent ends. The people of Chittor who had persecuted Mīrā had been devastated by war. Public opinion against Mīrā now swung around, and people began to feel that their misfortune was a result of the way she had been treated. The current Rāṇā therefore sent a deputation of *brāhmaṇs* to beg her to return. But Mīrā was happy in her life, and declined the offer. The *brāhmaṇs* – afraid of the Rāṇā's displeasure – began a hunger strike until she should change her mind. Mīrā therefore relented, and agreed to go with them the following day. During the night, however, she went into a nearby temple, and when the priests unlocked the gates in the morning only her scarf could be found. The priests concluded that she had merged into the image of Kṛishṇa. According to legend, so ended the life of a much-loved devotee, in a way that only added to her renown, and let the *brāhmaṇs* return in safety to Chittor. She would have been about 48 years old.

Mīrā, perhaps, with the help of an accomplice, made good her escape, and was never heard of again. Yet some songs from what seems to be a later period of her life still exist. In one, she speaks of being "old", her hair turned grey. Her songs are full of longing to meet her Master, whom she refers to as her *jogī,* though whether she ever found him again is unknown.

Mir'āt-i 'Ushshāq (P) *Lit.* mirror *(mir'āt)* of lovers *('ushshāq);* an anonymous glossary of Sufi technical terms, found in Y.E. Bertel's, *Taṣawwuf va-Adabīyāt-i Taṣawwuf* ('Sufism and Sufi Literature').

Mishnah (He) The first layer of rabbinic discussion of the Bible, attempting to distil the oral tradition of biblical interpretation into a code of religious law; organized into six orders, each dealing with a different aspect of Jewish life; completed in the third century CE, under the editorial direction of Rabbi Judah ha-Nasi. The *Talmud* consists of both the *Mishnah* and the further discussions and interpretations thereon of later rabbis through to the sixth or seventh century.

Moses bar Kepha (*c.*813–903) Born at Balad (now in northern Iraq); a renowned Jacobite bishop and writer in Syriac; a Christian monk who later became bishop of three cities, Beth-Ramman, Beth-Kionaya and Mosul (al-Mawsīl) on the Tigris, taking the name of Severus; patriarchal *periodeutēs* (visitor) of the diocese of Tagrit, where his wisdom and learning earned him a considerable reputation; buried at the monastery of St Sergius, on the Tigris, near his home town. Moses bar Kepha was a prolific writer, whose numerous works include commentaries on the Old and New Testaments, on the liturgy, on the writings of St Gregory Nazianus, and on Aristotle's *Dialectics;* various treatises on free will and predestination, on the soul (in 40 chapters), on prayers for the dead, and on the sacraments; and a history of the Church, a book against heresies, and various discourses and homilies.

Moses Cordovero (1522–70) A well-known Kabbalist of Safed, a mountain town in Galilee, Palestine; presumed from his name to have been born into a family of Spanish origin; a disciple of Joseph Caro and Solomon Alkabez, and a teacher of Isaac Luria (1534–72); most remembered for his systematic explanation of Kabbalistic principles in his *Pardes Rimmonim* ('Orchard of Pomegranates'), completed at the age of 27, and in his *Elimah Rabbati* ('Great Work to Elim'), finished ten years later; the author of a number of other works, including *Tomer Devorah* ('Palm Tree of Deborah'), which consists of short chapters of moral and ethical instruction on how to spiritually identify with each of the ten *sefirot* (divine emanations) and imbibe their qualities, thus drawing closer to the *sefirot* and to the Divine. *Tomer Devorah* paved the way for a proliferation of Kabbalistic ethical literature during the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, and influenced many later Kabbalists in Safed and Eastern Europe. He also wrote an extensive commentary on the *Zohar.*

Cordovero is commonly portrayed as a synthesizer and harmonizer of the sometimes divergent elements of Kabbalism prior to his time. God, he taught, is an utterly transcendent Being, like no other. No attribute can be

assigned to Him, because He is beyond all attributes and anthropomorphisms. In this, Cordovero agreed with the philosophers; but the difference between the Kabbalah and philosophy, he said, lay in the Kabbalah's practical approach to God by means of the *sefirot.*

According to Cordovero, the *sefirot* are the instruments or vessels of God. His substance is immanent in them. God reveals Himself by concealing Himself in the *sefirot.* Thus, God is revealed through the *sefirot.* The divine will is likewise an emanation of the Divine. Emanation itself takes place through the inner dynamics of and interactions between the *sefirot.* The world of emanation comes into being from an interplay between the direct light of the Divine and the light reflected within the *sefirot.* The lower world is formed out of the *sefirot* in a similar manner, and there is a seamless transition between the two.

Moses de León (1240–1305) Original name, Moses ben Shem Tov; a Spanish Kabbalist of whom little is known, considered by modern scholars to have been the author of much of the *Zohar* ('The Book of Splendour'), the best-known work of the *Kabbalah,* and whose influence in Judaism at one time rivalled that of the Bible and the *Talmud;* born in León, a region and former kingdom in northwest Spain; attracted to both religious and philosophical studies; known to have commissioned a copy of Moses Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed* in 1264; until around 1290, lived in the Kabbalist centre of Guadalajara in central Spain, subsequently travelling extensively before settling in Ávila, to the west of Madrid.

The *Zohar,* which first appeared in the 1280s, is largely written in a peculiar and artificial Aramaic. Very similar in style to traditional rabbinic *midrashim,* it is arranged as a collection of dialogues between Rabbi Simeon ben Yoḥai and his disciples, set in second-century Palestine. The work is essentially a mystical commentary on the *Torah* or *Pentateuch,* the first five books of the Bible.

According to an entry in the diary of the Kabbalist Isaac ben Samuel, Isaac met Moses in Valladolid. Moses told him that he possessed the original manuscript of the *Zohar* at his home in Ávila, which he agreed to show to Isaac, but died before being able to do so. Later, Isaac heard that Moses' wife had said that there was no such manuscript, and that the *Zohar* had in fact been written by Moses himself.

Nevertheless, the tradition persisted (and still does in some quarters) that the *Zohar* was second century in origin. It was Gershom Scholem, one of the great twentieth-century scholars of Jewish mysticism, who demonstrated that the *Zohar* almost certainly originated in medieval times. There are, for instance, oblique historical references to the Crusades and subsequent Arab rule in Palestine, while some of the laws and customs mentioned relate more to medieval Europe than second-century Palestine.

Scholem further showed that not only is the philosophy of the *Zohar* influenced by third- and fourth-century Neo-Platonism, but also that some of its key terminology comes from *Ginnat Egoz* ('Nut Orchard'), the work of the Spanish Kabbalist, Joseph Gikatilla, a contemporary and probably friend of Moses de León. Scholem also demonstrated that the Aramaic vocabulary and idiom of the *Zohar* is not only that of a native Hebrew speaker, but also has parallels to the Hebrew works of Moses de León.

Based on Moses de León's own comments in his other works, Scholem suggested that the author's intention was to counter the rising tide of intellectual rationalism in Spanish Judaism, which was leading to the neglect of religious life. The *Zohar* was part of Moses de León's attempt to breathe new life into traditional Judaism by providing a fresh interpretation of the *Pentateuch,* ascribed to a revered, though mythical, authority. Moses de León also wrote a number of other works (such as the *Testament of Rabbi Eliezer the Great*), which he ascribed pseudo-epigraphically to others. He is said to have been the author of over 20 books on Kabbalistic topics, of which 18 are wholly or partly extant.

Moses Maimonides (1135–1204) Original name, Moses ben Maimon; the foremost Jewish philosopher, legal authority and physician of medieval Judaism, whose influence spread far beyond the Jewish world; born into a distinguished family in Córdoba, Spain; educated by his scholarly father and other teachers, who were impressed by Moses' depth and scope. In 1148, when he was barely 13, Córdoba fell to the fanatic Muslim sect, the *Muwaḥḥidūn* (believers in *tawḥīd,* the oneness of God). As in the rest of Islamic Spain, the previous Muslim rulers had accorded the people of Córdoba religious freedom. Now the Jews were faced with the alternatives of exile or conversion to Islam.

What happened over the next decade is uncertain. Some authorities suggest that the Maimons chose to practise Judaism in their own home, while appearing as Muslims in public. Muslim records say that the Maimons were converted to Islam sometime between 1150 and 1160. But this is unreliably claimed of many Jewish scholars. Other authorities say that the Maimons led a wandering life in Spain and probably Provence, in France. In any event, the youthful Moses managed to continue his studies.

Around 1160, the family settled in Fez, in Morocco. Although the city was also under *Muwaḥḥidūn* rule, detection was less likely since the Maimons were strangers there. Moreover, the aging ruler of the *Muwaḥḥidūn* had become more tolerant in his old age, especially of Jews in the central, Moroccan part of his realm. Here, Moses, now in his mid-twenties, continued his studies of Jewish tradition and Greek philosophy, and began his study of medicine. In his medical writings, he often mentions the knowledge he acquired from North African Muslims.

In 1165, one of Moses' well-known teachers, Rabbi Judah ben Shoshan, was convicted of being a practising Jew, and was executed. Shortly after, the Maimons sailed to Palestine, where they made a tour of the Holy Land. Perhaps because the country was suffering economically and they were unable to make a suitable livelihood, the family moved once more, this time to al-Fusṭāṭ, the old city of Cairo. Here, Jews were free to practise their religion, though any who converted to Islam and later reverted to Judaism were liable to execution. Because of his past, Moses was once accused of having been a Muslim, and had to prove that he had never really adopted Islam.

Shortly before or after their arrival in Egypt, Moses' father died. The family, however, were supported by Moses' younger brother, David, who became a prosperous jeweller, giving Moses the time he needed to devote to scholarly pursuits and to his work in the Jewish community. In 1169, David was drowned in the Indian Ocean on a business trip, taking the family fortune with him, and leaving a wife and two children. Needing to support the family, and unwilling to make a living from religion, Moses became a physician.

He did not find immediate success, however, and it was only in 1185, after being appointed one of the court physicians to the vizier (the effective ruler of Egypt), that his fame began to spread. Retaining his private practice, he also lectured to his fellow physicians at the state hospital. Around 1177, he had become leader of the Jewish community, teaching and dealing with their various problems. These included an ongoing struggle against the Karaites, a Jewish school that rejected the authority of the rabbis, and whose religious observances were at variance with the orthodox rabbinic tradition.

Moses' first wife had died young, and some time after moving to Egypt, he remarried. The couple had one son, Abraham, who also became renowned for his scholarship. Abraham and his son, Obadyah, were mystics influenced by the Sufi tradition.

In common with other great polymaths of the past, Maimonides' literary output was considerable and varied. Influenced by Aristotle, his first work, written in Arabic at the age of 16, was on the terminology of logic and metaphysics (*Millot ha-Higgayon,* 'Treatise on Logical Terminology'). Another early treatise, again in Arabic, was *Ma'amar Ha'ibur* ('Essay on the Calendar'). At the age of 23, he began his first major work *Kitāb al-Sirāj* ('Book of Lights'), a commentary on the *Mishnah.* The work, which took him 10 years, is a comprehensive compendium of and commentary on Jewish legal decisions from earliest times to the third century CE. It includes relevant theological, archaeological and scientific information, and incorporates a number of introductory essays on various issues raised in the *Mishnah,* together with a summary of Judaism in 13 articles of faith.

This work was followed by another ten-year project – a masterly systematization of Jewish law, written in lucid Hebrew, *Mishneh Torah* ('*Torah* Reviewed'). In this work, Maimonides restricts himself to traditional views,

and only occasionally, when he can find no support for his views among the rabbis of the *Talmud*, does he circumspectly advance his own opinions, usually introduced by such phrases as "it appears to me". This is true, for instance, of his views concerning resurrection or that the messianic age refers to the political independence of Israel. Even in medical matters, when his knowledge was more advanced than in Talmudic times, he gives priority to Talmudic practice. Only in regard to witchcraft and enchantment, having given in great detail the Talmudic views and laws concerning such practices, does Maimonides express his own opinion in forceful terms, calling such practices, "lies and falsehood ... not fitting for Jews who are intelligent and wise", and describing anyone who believes in such things as "fools and ignoramuses" and like "immature women and children" (*Mishneh Torah, 'Avodat Kokhavim* 11:16).

In 1176, aged 41, Maimonides began the work for which he is most remembered, *Dalālat al-Hā'irīn* (He. *Moreh Nevukhim*, 'Guide of the Perplexed') written in Arabic. The work takes a rational approach to Judaism, attempting to harmonize philosophy, science and religion. While *Mishneh Torah* was written for the devout Jew, *Guide of the Perplexed* was written for the more enquiring person who had read philosophy, and who had doubts about the rationality of many aspects of Judaism and the Bible. The work attempts to resolve apparent irrationalities in the traditional faith. He explains, for example, that the anthropomorphic descriptions of God in the Bible are not meant to be taken literally. They are figurative portrayals of a spiritual reality. He also provides interpretations of some obscure biblical parables. Maimonides permitted himself more latitude in the *Guide* than in *Mishneh Torah*, expressing far more of his personal views. An influential book in the history of religious thought, the *Guide* was translated into Hebrew during Maimonides' lifetime, and later into Latin and many other European languages.

Mishneh Torah was the only book Maimonides wrote in Hebrew, and he expressed regret for not having translated his Arabic works into Hebrew. In a letter responding to the request of the rabbis of Lunel to translate the *Guide* into Hebrew, he replied that he wished he were young enough to do so.

Maimonides also wrote numerous lesser works and treatises on Jewish law, religion, philosophy and medicine (including a popular compendium of health rules dedicated to the *sulṭān*). He also maintained an active correspondence with scholars, students and other Jewish leaders, in which his warmth and humanity are apparent.

He often commented that the pressures of his many duties and activities gave him no peace of mind and weakened his health. When he died in al-Fusṭāṭ, in 1204, public mourning was declared in all parts of the Jewish world. His remains were taken to Tiberias, in Palestine, where his shrine still attracts many pilgrims.

Though always highly regarded, Maimonides' rational and often (at the time) radical views were not received without controversy and opposition, both during and after his lifetime. His belief in the incorporeality of God, for instance, was a minority view in his day, the majority believing that the scriptures supported the idea of a corporeal Divinity. After his death, the zealous Rabbi Solomon of Montpellier even persuaded the Christian authorities (in 1233) to burn *Guide of the Perplexed* as seriously heretical.

With the passage of time, Maimonides came to be regarded as a mainstay of traditional Judaism, and the greatest of all Jewish philosophers. His influence on the development of Judaism has been immeasurable. His medical writings were a significant advance in their own era, and his basic concepts have been described in recent times as remarkably modern. His philosophic work influenced many medieval, as well as later, scholars and creative thinkers. In one way or another almost all medieval writers on philosophy refer to him.

Muḥammad Dārā Shikoh (1615–59) Born near Ajmer; the brilliant and eldest of the four sons of the Mughul emperor, Shāh Jahān (1592–1666), appointed by his father as heir designate; challenged for the successorship by his fanatic brother, Aurangzeb (1618–1707), when Shāh Jahān became seriously sick in 1657; defeated by an alliance between Aurangzeb and their brother, Murād Bakhsh, at the Battle of Samūgaṛh (1658).

After the battle, Aurangzeb declared himself emperor, imprisoned both his father, Shāh Jahān (who had made an unexpected recovery), and his brother, Murād Bakhsh, and set out in pursuit of Dārā, who is traditionally believed to have been helped by Guru Har Rāi (1630–61), the seventh Sikh Guru. Dārā was captured after a long pursuit and a second battle (Battle of Deorai, 1659), in which he was relying on his ally Jaswant Singh of Mārwār, who deserted him three days before the battle. Defeated after three days of fierce fighting, he was executed by Aurangzeb. Aurangzeb was an able administrator and a military commander of considerable courage and skill. He was also ruthless and ambitious. In consolidating his power, he caused the death of one brother, and had the two others executed, together with a son and a nephew.

Dārā Shikoh was a student of Sufism, meeting many Muslim and Hindu mystics, the most notable being Miyān Mīr (*d.*1635), Shāh Muḥibb Allāh Illāhābādī, Shāh Dilrubā, Sarmad, Bābā Lāldās Bayrāgī (a follower of Kabīr), and Mullā Shāh (*d.*1661) of the *Qādirīyah* order, whose disciple he became in 1640. He aroused controversy over his belief in the underlying unity of the various religions, as in his observation, "The science of *Vedānta* is the science of Sufism"; author of *Risālah-i Ḥaqq Numā* ('Treatise that Reveals the Truth'), written in 1646.

Muḥammad, Prophet (*c.*570–632) Born in Mecca, and lived in what is now Saudi Arabia; the founder of Islam, who taught the importance of worshipping the one God. His revelations are recorded in the *Qur'ān*, and traditions concerning his life and teachings are found in the *Ḥadīth*.

See **Islam** (1.10).

Mu'īn al-Dīn Chishtī, Khwājah (*c.*1143–1236) A well-known Sufi born in Sīstān, now in southwestern Afghanistan; moved at an early age to Ajmer in Rajasthan, India, where it is said that he remained in meditation for 17 years before beginning to teach; believed to have been a disciple of Abū Najīb Suhravardī; belonged to the *Chishtīyah* Sufi order, and regarded as its founder in India, although the order itself was named after the village of Chisht, near Herāt (then in Persia, now Afghanistan), where the Syrian founder, Abū Ishāq, had lived; a writer in Persian, of whom a *dīvān* (collection of poems) of unknown authenticity still exists.

Distilling Sufism to its essence, Chishtī taught that a Sufi should possess, "a generosity like that of the ocean, a mildness like that of the sun, and a modesty like that of the earth" (*MDI* p.346). The *Chishtīyah* order emphasized the unity of being *(waḥdat al-wujūd)* or oneness with God, to be attained through both mental and vocal repetition *(dhikr)* of the Names of God. Material possessions were regarded as distractions on the path of meditation, and members avoided all violence. During the height of its popularity (*c.*1200–1350), a network of *Chishtīyah khānaqāh* (monasteries) were located throughout North India, in Rajasthan, the Punjab and Uttar Pradesh, from which various sub-branches of the order flourished. Mu'īn al-Dīn Chishtī's shrine in Ajmer has become a place of pilgrimage, visited by people of all religions.

Muktikā Upanishad (S) *Lit.* pearl *(muktikā) Upanishad;* belonging to the *Yajur Veda;* notable for listing the 108 *Upanishads,* and may thus be regarded as a later work; a short text, set as a series of questions asked of *Rāma* (as the Lord) by the semidivine, monkey-like being, Hanumān, who begins by asking how he can be easily released from bondage to material things, and attain salvation.

See also: **Upanishads**.

Muṇḍaka Upanishad (S) Belonging to the *Atharva Veda;* said to take its name from *muṇḍa* (shorn), because all who understand its teaching are liberated and 'shorn' of all illusion; a short, but highly esteemed text, set as the reply of Angiras to Shaunaka's query, "What is it, by knowing which, everything else becomes known?" Angiras is regarded as one of the seven mythological

ṛishis (sapta-ṛishi), the progenitors of mankind. The *Upanishad* distinguishes between the higher *(parā)* knowledge of the supreme *Brahman* and the lower *(aparā)* knowledge of the phenomenal world.

See also: **Upanishads**.

Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj al-Qushayrī, Abū al-Ḥusayn (*c*.817–875) Born in Nīshāpūr, in Iran; died at Naṣrābād, a suburb of Nīshāpūr; a Muslim scholar, well known as one of the major collectors of *ḥadīth* – the sayings and stories of Muḥammad handed down by oral tradition. The results of his extensive travels throughout Arabia, Egypt, Syria and Iraq in search of *ḥadīth* are collected in the *Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* ('Genuine Traditions of Muslim'), said to have been compiled from around 300,000 *ḥadīth*. His work is one of the six accepted collections of *ḥadīth*. For each *ḥadīth*, he provided its chain of transmission, and recorded textual variations. The work also includes an overview of early Islamic theology and a discussion of the *Qur'ān*.

See also: **The Islamic Way of Life** (1.10).

Myth of Adapa The Sumerian myth concerning the fall of man; a precursor to the *Genesis* story; preserved among the cuneiform tablets of the library of the Assyrian king, Ashurbanipal (reigned 668–627 BCE), unearthed at Nineveh during the nineteenth century. Although endowed with all knowledge by Enki (Sumerian god of knowledge and wisdom), Adapa is denied immortality. Summoned to receive punishment from Anu, the sky god, for breaking the wings of the south wind when it blew him into the sea, Adapa is advised by Enki not to accept the bread and water that will be offered to him. Anu's doorkeepers, Tammuz and Ningishzida, act as advocates for Adapa, advising Anu that Adapa only needs immortality to become a god. In a change of heart, Anu therefore offers him the Bread and the Water of Immortality. But as advised by Enki, Adapa refuses, and man thus loses his chance and becomes mortal.

See also: **Sumerian and Mesopotamian Spirituality** (1.3).

Naassene Hymn A gnostic text preserved by Hippolytus (*fl.*210–236) in his *Refutation of All Heresies*.

See **reincarnation and transmigration (in Christianity): Other Gnostics** (6.3).

Nāda Bindu Upanishad (S) *Lit.* point *(bindu)* of Sound *(Nāda) Upanishad;* belonging to the *Ṛig Veda;* addresses the attainment of liberation and

annulment of *karma*, through the practice of *yoga* and listening to the mystic Sound *(Nāda)*; regarded as one of the *Yoga Upanishads*.

See also: **Upanishads**.

Nadīm, Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq al- (*c*.935–995) A book dealer from Baghdad; also called *al-Warrāq* (the manuscriptist); his *Kitāb al-Fihrist* ('The Catalogue'), written about 987–988, lists the authors of his time and before, together with notes, commentaries and observations on various matters, including religion and mysticism. *Al-Fihrist* is the sole source of information on many subjects, and is hence of considerable value to researchers of this period.

Nāgārjuna A second- and/or third-century (CE) Indian Buddhist philosopher-monk; founder of *Mādhyamika* (Middle Way) Buddhism, and regarded as a patriarch by several subsequent schools. Although many texts in Chinese and Tibetan are attributed to him (many incorrectly), Nāgārjuna is particularly remembered for his *Madhyamaka Kārikā* (full name, *Mūlamadhyamaka Kārikā*, often called the *Mādhyamika Kārikā*), a Sanskrit verse exposition *(kārikā)* of the Middle Way *(Mādhyamika)*. He is also the author of the Sanskrit work, *Vigrahavyāvartanī* (*lit.* no separation). Both these texts concern the nature of Reality, the origin of existence and the way to attain knowledge. His elucidation of *shūnyatā* (emptiness, non-attachment), a key aspect of *Mādhyamika*, is considered intellectually brilliant. A well-known commentary on the *Madhyamaka Kārikā*, known as the *Prasannapadā* (*lit.* clear-worded), was written by the seventh-century Chandrakīrti.

Nāgārjuna maintained that all existence is relative: nothing exists independent of its context. There is no eternal soul, no eternal Reality underlying transient forms; even unconditioned enlightenment *(nirvāṇa)* of this state of affairs is not independent of change. The enlightened ones are fully and permanently conscious that all moments are relative.

Little is known of Nāgārjuna's life, and when he lived: different texts provide dates that span 500 years. The earliest biographical account, in Chinese by a well-known Buddhist translator, Kumārajīva, is dated to about 405 CE. However, although there is some disagreement between accounts in various texts, it is generally agreed that he was born in South India to a *brāhmaṇ* family; showed early signs of intellectual brilliance; was deeply affected when first hearing the doctrines of *Mahāyāna* Buddhism; and taught the *Dharma* (Truth) in India, defeating many opponents in learned discussions. He is traditionally believed to have lived to an old age before terminating his own life.

See also: **Madhyamaka Kārikā**.

Nag Hammadi Codices, Nag Hammadi Library A rare find of 12 gnostic codices or leather-bound, papyrus books, discovered in December 1945 by two Egyptian farmers in the Naj' Hammadi region of Upper Egypt. Containing a total of 52 gnostic texts, copied and buried during the mid-fourth century CE, they have become the most important literary source for the modern understanding of gnosticism. Written in Coptic, probably all of the texts are translations from the Greek, most of which appear to have been written during the first to mid-fourth centuries CE.

A considerable period elapsed between the finding of the codices and their first publication, even in the original Coptic. The *Gospel of Thomas* was first published in 1959, and Codex I, called the *Jung Codex* after its acquisition in 1952 by the Jung Institute of Zurich, was published in six volumes between 1956 and 1975. The remaining codices, however, were held in the Coptic Museum in Cairo, and although various ineffectual plans were made for their publication, nothing actually happened until the appointment of the International Committee for the Nag Hammadi Codices, at the end of 1970. *The Facsimile Edition of the Nag Hammadi Codices* was subsequently published in 12 volumes between 1972 and 1984. The first complete English edition was published in 1977, and a revised edition in 1988. After publication, the *Jung Codex* was returned to the Coptic Museum, where the complete collection now resides.

See also: **Gnosticism** (1.6).

Nahua Poetry See **The Nahua of Central America** (1.14).

Nāmdev (*c.*1270–1350) A well-known poet-Saint *(Sant)* of medieval India, known as the Saint from Maharashtra; born, according to some, at Paṇḍharpur, and others, at Narsibamnī in the Marāṭhwāḍā region; the son of a devout family, whose father was a devotee of *Viṭṭhal,* a local idol of the deity, *Vishṇu,* at Paṇḍharpur; a tailor and calico printer by profession, and thus of a low caste.

Little is known of Nāmdev's life, and many of the traditional stories about him are conflicting. According to one tradition, for instance, from an early age, Nāmdev was a devotee of *Viṭṭhal,* like his father. On one occasion, the young Nāmdev was distressed when *Viṭṭhal* did not drink the milk offering which his busy father had asked him to place before the idol. His lament was heard, however, and the idol drank the milk. Another legend has Nāmdev as a member of a gang of murderous thieves. Overcome by remorse one day on hearing the pitiful laments of the wife of a man he had killed, he was about to take his own life, when he was saved by a vision of *Vishṇu.* Whatever the truth, it seems he adopted the practice of the mystic Name *(Nām)* when he met his his *Guru,* Visobā Khechar, and received initiation from him.

In his late twenties, Nāmdev began an itinerant life which lasted more than 25 years. He travelled through Gujarat, Kathiawar, Central India, Rajasthan, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and the Punjab. Even today, there are memorials, places and traditions associated with his name in all these states, and small groups of devotees who claim to be his followers. Finally, he settled in a lonely place in the Gurdāspur district of the Punjab, and the village which sprang up around him became known as Ghumān. Here, he lived for the remaining 15 or 20 years of his life.

In Maharashtra, the Vārkarī (Pilgrim) School was founded in his name, so called because of its emphasis on pilgrimage to Paṇḍharpur to worship *Viṭṭhal*, and characterized by *bhakti* (devotion) and freedom from caste in a religious context. But it seems Nāmdev, never retuned to live in Maharashtra. Indeed, two of his devotees, Godā and Viṭhā, write, "Nāma has left Paṇḍharpur" and "He has orphaned us."

Nāmdev wrote thousands of devotional poems in Hindi, Marathi and Punjabi, some of which have been preserved in the *Nāmdev Gāthā*, and a few included in the *Ādi Granth*. His themes are the quest for God within, the illusion of the world, the equality of all human beings, *bhakti* to the one God, the *Guru* and the mystic Name *(Nām)*, and so on. Very popular in the Punjab and Maharashtra, his writings inspired a tradition of Marathi devotional poetry.

Nasafī, 'Azīz al-Dīn (*d.*1263) Born in Nasaf, probably during the thirteenth century; lost all his family in the Persian-Mughul wars; travelled a great deal, living in Bactria for a while, finally settling in the Persian state of Fārs; the author of six books, of which *al-Insān al-Kāmil* ('The Perfect Man') is the best known, in which he describes the characteristics of a perfect man and expresses his views on creation, ethics and morality, how to live in this world, and that mysticism, as the way to Reality, is the ultimate goal of human existence.

Nehemiah The biblical book of the fifth-century (BCE) Nehemiah (*lit. Yahweh* has comforted), also called Zerubabel; an official at the court of the Persian king, Artaxerxēs I (465–425 BCE); appointed governor of Judah upon the return of the Jews from Babylonian exile; in charge of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem and reorganizing the Judaean province. The moral and religious reforms of Nehemiah are recorded in the biblical books of *Ezra* and *Nehemiah*. Pre-fifteenth-century Hebrew manuscripts, as well as the Greek *Septuagint* (*c.*C3rd–C2nd BCE) regard *Ezra* and *Nehemiah* as one book. Nehemiah and Ezra are also credited with being the authors of *1* and *2 Chronicles*. The books of *Ezra* and *Nehemiah* are also called *1* and *2 Esdras*.

See also: **Ezra**.

Nestorians An early branch of Christianity which broke away from the mainstream after the turbulent Council of Ephesus in 431 CE. Nestorius (*d*.451), appointed Patriarch of Constantinople in 428 CE by the Roman Emperor Theodosius II (401–450), taught that Jesus had two natures, human and divine. This was the generally accepted theological position. However, he went on to say that Jesus was two *persons* and had at times been one, and at times the other. This was contradictory to the established point of view which taught – and still teaches – that the two natures are merged into one person. Nestorius' doctrine has been called Diophysite. The Council of Ephesus, later endorsed by the Council of Chalcedon in 451, asserted the 'one person' point of view and Nestorius was deposed, going into exile in Antioch where there were many who agreed with him.

Nezahualcóyotl A fifteenth-century king of the Nahua, ruling the state of Texcoco, bordering Mexico. It is said that as a boy, Nezahualcóyotl, hiding in a tree, saw his own father, the present king, murdered by the enemies of his people. Later, he wandered in poverty for many years with a price on his head until his kingdom was restored to him. Formed a triple alliance with the Aztec state of Tenochtitlán (founded in 1325) and the state of Tlacopan, which early on assumed an inferior role in the alliance. During the reigns of Nezahualcóyotl (1431–72) and his successor, Nezahualpilli (1472–1516), the alliance conquered a vast territory, but which by 1519 had succumbed to Aztec dominance.

See also: **The Nahua of Central America** (1.14).

Nikhilānanda, Swāmī (1895–1973) A Vedantist and disciple of Swāmī Vivekānanda; became a monk of the Rāmakṛishṇa order in 1924; passed several years in a Himalayan *āshram,* during which time he studied Hinduism and other systems of religion and philosophy; was sent to the USA in 1931, founding the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center in 1933, remaining its spiritual leader until his death in 1973. His most significant writings include *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna,* and his translations and commentaries on the principal *Upanishads,* the *Bhagavad Gītā* and Shankara's *Ātmabodha* (Self-Knowledge).

Nishmat Ḥayyim (He) *Lit.* soul *(nishmat)* of life *(ḥayyim);* a book defending the concept of transmigration by the Kabbalist, Manasseh ben Israel; published in Amsterdam in 1652.

Niyāz Aḥmad Barelvī, Shāh (*c.*1760–1834) A Sufi, born at Sirhind, in the Punjab, India; lost his father when very young; educated by his mother, before moving to Delhi at the age of seventeen, where he continued his education

under the Sufi, Mawlānā Fakhr al-Dīn; worked as a teacher for some time, before being instructed by Fakhr al-Dīn to move to Bareily in western Uttar Pradesh, where he established a *khānaqāh* (Sufi 'monastery'). A prolific author, his works on Sufism include a number of treatises, some in a delicate and refined Urdu, together with some excellent poetry in Arabic and Persian. A favourite theme of his writings is *waḥdat al-wujūd* (unity of being). Shāh Niyāz had disciples in India, Iran and Arabic countries, including Afghanistan and Samarkand.

Niẓām al-Dīn Awliyā', Shaykh (*c.*1243–1325) A well-known Sufi of the *Chishtīyah* order, of Delhi in North India, whose ancestors came to India from Bukhārā, Central Asia; popularly known as *Maḥūb-i Ilāhī* (God's Beloved) and *Sulṭān al-Mashā'ikh* (King of Saints). His teachings are known through a number of extant discourses. His tomb in Delhi is a popular place of pilgrimage.

Nṛisiṃha Uttara Tāpanīya Upanishad (S) *Lit.* the later *(uttara)* (part) of the *Upanishad* regarding ascetic self-sacrifice *(tāpanīya)* to *Nṛisiṃha* (*lit.* man-lion), a mythological incarnation of the deity *Vishṇu;* a short text belonging to the *Atharva Veda.*

See also: **Upanishads**.

Numbers See **Pentateuch**.

Nūrbakhsh, Muḥammad (1393–1465) A Sufi, born in Persia of an east Arabian family, who claimed to be descendants of Muḥammad; real name, Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allāh, but given the name Nūrbakhsh, meaning 'gift *(baksh)* of light *(nūr)*', by his *Shaykh,* Isḥāq al-Khuttalānī; declared himself to be the *Mahdi* (Muslim Messiah), assuming the title of Caliph, leading several local uprisings in an attempt to gain power in Persia. A Sufi order bearing his name is descended from him.

Odes of Solomon A collection of 42 mystic, devotional and often ecstatic poems in praise of the Lord, the Word and the Saviour; composed very early in the Christian era, possibly around 100 CE or even earlier, probably in or around the city of Antioch; contain literary images and mystical truths also found in Jewish psalms and Wisdom literature, as well as Christian, Mandaean and Manichaean mystical writings; almost certainly written in Greek or Syriac, perhaps by a writer who was bilingual and wrote the *Odes* in both languages or supervised their translation from one to the other at an early date.

The *Odes of Solomon* survive in only two main manuscripts, both in Syriac. The first dates from the fifteenth century, and contains all the odes

except 1, 2 and the beginning of 3. The second dates from the tenth century, and is lacking its earlier part, beginning in the middle of *Ode 17*. *Ode 11* is also known from a third-century Greek papyrus. Five other odes (1, 5, 6, 22 and 25) are extant in Coptic, embedded in a well-known gnostic text, the fourth-century *Pistis Sophia*. Pooling these resources, only *Ode 2* and the beginning of *Ode 3* are entirely missing.

Neither of the two Syriac manuscripts are of an early date, and there are differences between these texts, often minor, sometimes significant. One of these two also has occasional verses missing due to the inattention of the scribe. It is certain, therefore, that the extant texts are not entirely as originally penned, and the possibility of significant editing having taken place in some of the odes cannot be ruled out. However, in the main, the consistency of the odes suggests that they are largely as the original author intended.

The fifteenth-century manuscript was found one day by the early twentieth-century biblical scholar, Rendel Harris, while sorting through a pile of miscellaneous manuscripts lying in a corner of his office. Harris soon realized that he unknowingly had in his possession an almost complete text of the previously lost, *Odes of Solomon*. His first annotated edition of the original text, together with an English translation, was published the following year, in 1909. Since then this collection of beautiful odes has been the subject of a number of scholarly translations and discussions. Harris himself remained intrigued and enchanted with the *Odes*, publishing the last of a number of revised editions of his work in 1920, in collaboration with his friend and fellow scholar, Alphonse Mingana.

On the Cosmos (Gk. *Peri cosmos*, L. *De mundo*) A probably first-century (CE) composition, written in Greek, attributed to Aristotle, but generally believed to be by an unknown hand; describes the known universe in terms of Greek natural science, followed by a lyrical account of how the one God, through His creative Power *(Dynamis)*, creates, sustains and rules everything in a single harmonious whole.

On the Origin of the World An untitled gnostic text from the Nag Hammadi codices, the name of which has been assigned by modern scholars; probably written during the early fourth century; represents no particular school of gnostic thought; draws from a number of sources to support its thesis, including Greek, Egyptian, Jewish, Christian and Manichaean traditions; concerns the emanation of the heavenly realms of creation out of the "shadow" which exists on the exterior of the "limitless light" of the "eternal *aeon* of Truth", through the agency of *Pistis Sophia* (Faith-Wisdom) and the *archon* (ruler), *Yaldabaoth;* includes an extended gnostic interpretation of the creation of man from the primal "Adam of light"; ends with an apoca-

lyptic description of the dissolution of the heavens so created in which the perfect return to the "eternal realm", while the imperfect enter the "kingdoms of the immortals".

Oracle of Apollo From the Latin, *oraculum* (to pray, to request, to speak); in the classical world, an 'oracle' was a divine communication, often ambiguous or allegorical, delivered through the medium of the priest or priestess of a shrine in response to a suppliant's request, and presumed to come from the deity to whom the shrine was dedicated. The 'oracle' was also the priest or priestess, or the shrine itself.

Such shrines were common in the ancient world, though the means by which the message was received varied from shrine to shrine. Usually, it was by some form of divination like the interpretation of the rustling of leaves on a sacred tree or the sound of a temple gong, or by drinking the waters of a sacred spring, or by 'incubation', in which the petitioner slept in the temple precincts and received an answer in a dream. Offerings were also expected in the form of a sacrificial animal (in a good state of health!) or of some other kind.

The most renowned was the Oracle of *Apollo*, at Delphi, on the slopes of Mount Parnassus. According to legend, the oracle first belonged to *Gaia* (goddess of the earth), but later became *Apollo*'s, either by gift or theft. Here, the presiding priestess, known as the *Pythia*, was a woman over 50 living apart from her husband. Her advice or blessing was sought by the rich and powerful, often regarding the possible outcome of war or some political action. After bathing in the Castalian spring and drinking from the sacred spring of Cassotis, the *Pythia* entered the temple, descended into a basement cell, and there chewed the poisonous leaves of the laurel, the sacred tree of *Apollo*. Her words, intelligible or otherwise, were then recorded and interpreted by the priests, who wrote down the results in often highly ambiguous verse.

Other well-known Grecian oracles existed at Dodona (of *Zeus*), Epidaurus (of Asclepius), Amphicleia (of *Dionysus*), Oropus (of the hero Amphiaraus), and of *Apollo* at Thēbes, Tegyra, Abae, Coropē, Ptoon, and on the island of Delos, *Apollo*'s birthplace. In Anatolia (now the Asian part of Turkey), there were oracles of *Apollo* at Patara, Branchidae, Claros and Grynium. None of these were as prestigious as the oracle of *Apollo* at Delphi.

Origen (*c.* 185–254) Latin name, Oregenes Adamantius; probably born in Alexandria, Egypt; the son of pagan parents, according to the Neo-Platonist, Porphyry; the son of Christian parents, according to the Church historian, Eusebius, who says that Origen's father, Leonidēs, was martyred in 202, leaving Origen to provide for his mother and six younger brothers; lived in the house of an affluent lady for a while, then worked as a teacher of

grammar, while practising a rigorous asceticism; a student of Clement of Alexandria at the school for Christian instruction, taking over the school, probably sometime during the first decade of the third century; according to Eusebius, castrated himself while still a young man in order to work more comfortably with female neophytes, although the story may be fictitious; according to Porphyry, attended the discourses of Ammonius Saccas (perhaps the one Origen refers to in a letter as his "teacher of philosophy").

Around 212, Origen requested a certain Heraclas, whom he had met at the philosophy discourses, to help him with beginners at the school, leaving him free to study, and to teach the more advanced students. Origen learned Hebrew, and began one of his most significant works, the *Hexapla*, a comparative arrangement of six versions of the Old Testament in parallel columns, in Greek and Hebrew, one of which he had found in a jar in the Jordan valley. Apart from the intrinsic interest of the work, the motivation was to provide a comparison of the Greek and Hebrew for discussions with the rabbis, who only acknowledged the authenticity of the Hebrew.

Some while later, he received support from a wealthy Christian, Ambrose (one of Origen's converts), who provided Origen with shorthand scribes, and to whom Origen dedicated a number of his works. Origen produced a rapid succession of commentaries on Old Testament texts, as well as works such as *On the Resurrection* ('Peri anastaseos') and *On First Principles* ('De principiis'). He also began his commentary on John's gospel, originally begun as a refutation of the commentary of the gnostic Heracleon, a disciple of Valentinus. During this period, he also travelled to Rome, Arabia, Antioch, Greece and Palestine. In Caesarea Palestine, he was ordained as a presbyter.

That Origen was a layman had aroused the hostility of Demetrias, Bishop of Alexandria, who was envious of Origen's renown and demand as a preacher. Origen therefore remained in Caesarea as a teacher, where he attracted many students, including Gregory Thaumaturgus, later Bishop of Neo–Caesarea. Around 235, at the time of the persecution of the Roman emperor, Maximinus (ruled 235–238), Origen was in Cappadocia. Some while after (*c.*248), he wrote *Contra Celsum* ('Against Celsus'), a detailed response to the summary dismissal of Christianity by the second-century pagan philosopher, Celsus. During the persecution of the Emperor Decius (ruled 249–251) in 250, he was jailed and tortured, but survived, to die some years later in Tyre, where his tomb still existed at the time of the Crusades.

Origen's main literary contribution was his exegesis of the entire Bible, together with his *Hexapla*. Sadly, his fall from favour two centuries later resulted in the destruction of many of his works. Very little of his original Greek has survived, and the Latin translations that exist are largely the work of the fourth-century Rufinus, who so paraphrased, edited, 'corrected' and truncated Origen's work that it is difficult to distinguish Origen from Rufinus.

Origen's philosophy is difficult to summarize in a few words. The centre of his thinking was God, the divine transcendent Being who is all-loving, all-powerful and the source of all. Through His *Logos* (Word), out of His abundant love, He created spiritual beings and gave them freedom, an act which necessarily entailed some degree of self-limitation on His part. On the one hand, God needs the creation for the expression of His love and power. On the other, He can bring it to an end whenever He wishes. Origen was aware of the paradoxes.

By ignoring God, the created beings fell from grace: some became angels, some human beings, some devils. Souls are thus pre-existent: they exist prior to human birth (though whether reincarnation and transmigration were a part of Origen's scenario remains a matter of debate). Salvation is the process of spiritual re-education. The nature of this world is corrective and remedial. Even Satan has the power to change.

Only one soul, the Son, had remained in loving communion with God. Uniting himself with the Son, the *Logos* took birth as Christ, and became the means of salvation for other souls, for restoring souls from matter to spirit. Those who met Christ saw him according to their own spiritual capacity. Some saw just a normal human being, others saw their Lord and Saviour. God is one, but the Son is like a ladder: mystic steps on the way to the vision of the one Divine. The soul is united with God in Christ; both the soul and the Church become the bride of the *Logos*, as portrayed in Origen's interpretation of the biblical *Song of Songs*. The Spirit is veiled by symbols, parables and allegory in history, in scriptures, in the sacraments. The concern of the commentator is to reveal this spirit.

Salvation is a process of spiritual transformation. The Church is a school, but the process continues in the next life. Thus, hell cannot be eternal, only corrective, since God would never abandon any of His creatures. But because He respects the freedom He has given to His souls, it may take time. Nor is heaven permanent. Because souls are free, there is no conclusion to the process, for virtue has no value if it is not the consequence of free choice. Christ's work continues until all souls have been saved, after which the process may begin all over again.

Origen lived at a time when apart from the basic apostolic doctrine, Christians were free to think creatively and to speculate. Inevitably, this led to differences of opinion, divisions and even schisms. The later councils of the early fourth century onwards, after Christianity had received official Roman sanction, were largely designed to formulate belief and eradicate 'heresy'. The introduction of Greek philosophy into the Christian agenda by Justin Martyr, Clement, Origen and others was innovative, and paved the way for what became 'orthodox' theology. Until the late fourth century, Origen was held in high esteem, but as the character of the continuous theological debate changed and crystallized, so did the perception of Origen's

work. In the end, his ideas, which had provided a stimulus for so many, were rejected. Not until he became subject to the more objective scholarly approach of the twentieth century was his reputation as one of the finest thinkers of the early Church restored.

See also: **reincarnation and transmigration (in Christianity)** (6.3).

Orphic Texts Any of a number of texts used by the Orphic mystery schools, named after the legendary Orpheus, and dealing with such subjects as human perfection, the immortality of the soul, transmigration, and the afterlife.

See also: **Orpheus** (1.9).

Ovid (*c.*43 BCE – 17 CE) Full name, Publius Ovidus Naso; born in Sulmo (now Sulmona, Italy), into an old and reputable family; educated in Rome, where – despite the remonstrances of his father – he neglected his studies in favour of poetry; a Roman poet whose verse is noted for its technical excellence and its rich interpretations of classical mythology; remembered especially for his *Metamorphoses* ('Transformation') and *Ars amatoria* ('Art of Love').

After finishing school in Athens and some time travelling in Asia Minor and Sicily, the young Ovid, seemingly destined for a career in public life, dutifully accepted the offer of minor judicial posts as the first step on the ladder. Realizing, however, that his interests and talent lay in his poetry, he soon gave up the idea of public life to devote himself to poetry. His earlier works – witty reflections on seduction, amorous intrigue and worldly love – mirrored the sophisticated hedonist society in which he moved, and were an immediate success. This success, however, was rudely interrupted when, in 8 CE, he was banished by the Emperor Augustus to Tomis, on the Black Sea, in what is now Romania, on the very edge of the Roman Empire. His books were also banned from public libraries.

Ovid gives two reasons for the exile: one, his book, *Ars amatoria,* and the other an "indiscretion" which he does not identify, but which is probably related in some way to the adultery of Augustus' granddaughter, Julia, who was banished at the same time. The emperor, at that time, was engaged in a programme of moral reform. Despite all his pleas, Ovid was not permitted to return, and he died in exile nine years later.

Oxyrhynchus Papyri A collection of papyri, dating from the first to the eighth centuries CE, found in the rubbish heaps of the ancient town of Oxyrhynchus, once capital of the nineteenth province of Upper Egypt and present site of the village of al-Bahnasa, situated on the western edge of the Nile Valley; first discovered by two young British archaeologists from Oxford, Bernard Grenfell and Arthur Hunt, in 1897; largely written in Greek and Latin, but

also in demotic Egyptian, Coptic, Hebrew, Syriac and Arabic; including – often only as sections or fragments – religious texts, early copies of the New Testament, some fragments of previously unknown sayings attributed to Jesus (which turned out to be from the *Gospel of Thomas*), and a number of Greek classics, previously lost, such as Pindar, Menander and Callimachus.

The thought of unknown gospels in the everyday use of people who lived so close to Jesus' time caught both the public as well as scholarly imagination and prompted an intensive period of Egyptian excavation. Over the following decade, a vast number of papyri were unearthed from various sites. It was from a study of these documents, that it became clear that the language of the New Testament was not – as previously thought – the Greek of the Holy Spirit, but the Greek of the common people.

Rubbish is a window into the lives of the depositors, and far more was found at Oxyrhynchus than religious and philosophical fragments. Of the great mass of papyri discovered only two or three percent were literary. The vast majority were private documents – "letters, invitations, petitions, contracts, deeds, leases, lists, tickets, accounts, birth notices, death notices, complaints, reports, accounts, receipts, wills, marriage agreements, divorces, legal proceedings, questions to the oracles, and so on" (*MNT* p.101). All aspects of everyday life are represented, including the contents of the Roman record office which appears to have undergone a thorough clear-out in early Christian times. The old records had been carried out to the rubbish heap in baskets and set alight. But supervision must have been scant, for the fire went out before they were all consumed, and the sand blew over the remains, burying and preserving them for maybe 1,800 years. Some of these papyri were even carried into Grenfell's camp in the same baskets in which they had been taken out to the city limits, so many centuries before.

Many of the letters have a personal touch that reaches across the centuries through the familiar human feelings they express. One small boy who had clearly been left behind against his will when his father had set out on a trip to Alexandria, writes (among other things), "If you won't take me along with you to Alexandria, I won't write you a letter, or speak to you, or say goodbye to you, and if you go to Alexandria, I won't take your hand or ever greet you again!" (in *MNT* p.101).

Padma Purāṇa (S) One of the 18 principal *Purāṇas,* exalting the deity *Vishṇu.*

See also: **Purāṇas**.

Paingala Upanishad (S) Belonging to the *Yajur Veda;* consists of the answers of the sage Yājñavalkya to a series of questions put by the seeker, Paingala, concerning the generation of the universe, how the Lord *(Īshvara)* acquired

the status of a *jīva* (incarnate soul), the *mahāvākyas* (great utterances) of the *Vedas,* and the nature of a *jñānī* (one who knows).

See also: **Upanishads**.

Paltū (*c.*1710–80) An eighteenth-century Indian Saint *(Sant)* and poet, of whom little is known, even the exact dates of his birth and death being largely guesswork. According to *Bhajnāvalī* (*lit.* songs of devotion), a work by Paltū's brother, Paltū Prasād, Paltū was born in Nangā-Jalālpur in Uttar Pradesh, near the sacred Hindu town of Ayodhyā (the birthplace of the legendary Rāma Chandra, hero of the *Rāmāyaṇa*). Paltū states in his poetry that he led a householder's life, and belonged to the *Baniyā* (grocers') caste. There are still those in Uttar Pradesh who claim Paltū as an ancestor.

It is sometimes said that Paltū and his brother were initiated by Bhīkhā, a well-known North Indian Saint *(Sant)*. However, Paltū himself does not mention Bhīkhā's name in any of his poems. On the other hand, Paltū Prasād says that he and his brother were disciples of Govind Jī. This is supported by the traditional story that when Paltū left Ayodhyā in search of a perfect Master, he went to Vārāṇasī, where he went to Gulāl Sāhib. Gulāl Sāhib referred him to his disciple, Bhīkhā – who sent him back to his Master. Gulāl Sāhib then told the young Paltū to go to Govind Sāhib, who also taught the path of the *Shabd* (Word), and who initiated him. Paltū Prasād says that after his initiation, Paltū made rapid spiritual progress, and achieved the highest spiritual goal. It is because of this rapid transformation that his Master renamed him Paltū, meaning 'one who has been transformed', from *palaṭnā* (to turn back, to return, to transform).

Paltū's poetry is remarkable for its robust and outspoken language. His criticism of the rituals and customs of organized religion and the hypocrisy of self-styled priests and holy men endeared him to the people, but earned him enemies among the religious authorities. Persecuted for the boldness of his expression, he was burnt alive when his door was barricaded and his hut set on fire, supposedly by opponents of his teachings.

Papias Second-century Bishop of Hierapolis, in Phrygia (now in Turkey); a friend of Polycarp (Bishop of Smyrna in the early first century); said by later writers to have been martyred in 163, some say in Rome, others in Pergamum (in northwest Asia Minor); author of a five-volume work, *The Sayings of the Lord Explained,* now extant only in a few fragments quoted in the works of others, but providing some important information concerning early Christianity and gospel origins.

Papias himself says that he never met any of the apostles, but whenever he got the chance, he questioned their followers to find out precisely what

"the Lord" had said. "For I imagined that what was to be got from books was not so profitable to me as what came from the living and abiding voice" (in Eusebius, *History of the Church* 3:39). Papias' work was used by the early Christian fathers of both the Eastern and Western churches until the early fourth century. The fourth-century Eusebius, who quotes only four short passages from Papias (in Eusebius, *History of the Church* 2:15, 3:39), says that Papias propagated the idea that after the resurrection of the dead, Christ's kingdom would be materially established on earth for a period of 1,000 years, a common belief among the early fathers. Eusebius suggests that Papias and others got such notions by misinterpreting the mystic and symbolic language of the apostles (Eusebius, *History of the Church* 3:39).

Pardes Rimmonim (He) *Lit.* orchard *(pardes)* of pomegranates *(rimmonim)*; a systematic explanation of Kabbalistic principles by Rabbi Moses Cordovero (1522–70) of Safed, Palestine.

See also: **Moses Cordovero**.

pastoral letters Three short New Testament letters (*1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*) written as if from Paul, and addressed to Timothy and Titus, two of Paul's closest associates, mentioned in his other letters (Timothy also appears in *Acts*); referred to since the eighteenth century as the pastoral letters.

These three letters, which share a common style and may reasonably be attributed to the same author, are of questionable authenticity. Nineteenth-century German scholars were the first to document the differences of content, style and vocabulary between them and the other letters attributed to Paul. There are also anachronistic descriptions of church organization, historical and biographical events and the heresies of the day. The letters are listed in the Muratorian Canon (*c.*180), but are missing from the collection of Pauline letters in the early-third century manuscript, P46. In fact, they are not mentioned by any early Christians until the end of the second century.

The letters contain pastoral instructions on the efficient running of a developed Christian community, the appointment of qualified personnel, the maintenance of discipline (personal and in the churches), the preservation of the faith from heresy, and the conduct of prayer. All this indicates conditions long after the demise of Paul, reflecting a time of religious stability when expectations of an imminent Second Coming had abated. The letters also contain advice concerning the behaviour and morality expected of Christians, including unconvincing echoes of Paul's genuine letters. For all these reasons many modern scholars regard the pastoral letters as second-century forgeries.

Patañjali (*c.*200 BCE) Pseudonym of the author or authors of the *Yoga Sūtras*, which explains the classical system of *rāja yoga*, also called *Pātañjala* or *ashṭānga yoga*.

See also: **Yoga Sūtras**.

Pentateuch The first five books of the Bible: *Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers* and *Deuteronomy;* also called the 'law of Moses' and the *Torah* ('Law'); covers the history of Israel up to the death of Moses, together with the two creation stories with which *Genesis* opens. The Hebrew names are taken from the first words of each book: *Bereshit* ('In the Beginning'), *Shemot* ('Names'), *Va-Yikra* ('And He called'), *Ba-Midbar* ('In the desert'), and *Devarim* ('Words'). The Greek names relate to the contents: *Genesis* ('Birth'), *Exodos* ('Departure'), *Leuitikos* ('Of the Levites'), *Arithmoi* ('Numbers'), and *Deuteronomion* ('Second Law'), the principle followed in most other languages.

Genesis is the first book of the Bible. It relates mythological stories concerning God's creation of the world; the origin of man; and the great flood, sent as a punishment for human wickedness, and survived only by Noah and the inhabitants of his ark, from which the earth is repopulated. It tells the legendary history of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Israel) and his twelve sons – the progenitors of the twelve tribes of Israel; the selling into slavery of Jacob's favourite son, Joseph, by his jealous brothers; Joseph's arrival in Egypt, his life there, and his eventual appointment as a high-ranking officer in Pharaoh's administration; the emigration of Joseph's brothers to Egypt during a time of famine; their reunion with Joseph; and Joseph's death in Egypt.

The origins of *Genesis* are uncertain. The two creation myths and the story of the flood, however, have antecedents in early Mesopotamian mythology, where symbols such as the Tree of Life are commonly encountered.

Genesis tells the story of the patriarchs and the origin of the Israelites, including God's "everlasting covenant" with Abraham (17:7, 13, 19), and His promise to make Abraham's people a "great nation" (12:2) and lead them to the promised land of Canaan (12:1, 15:7, 35:12). *Exodus, Leviticus* and *Numbers* are centred on the life of Moses. These three books recount the formation of the children of Israel, and the constitution of their code of social and religious law.

Exodus has two primary themes: the Israelites' escape from Egypt, where they had become slaves, and God's renewed covenant with the Israelites through the prophet Moses. Moses receives a revelation of the divine Name on the mountain of *Yahweh* (Mount Sinai), to which he leads the Israelites through the desert. There, God reaffirms His original covenant with the people. Almost immediately, the covenant is broken by the people's adora-

tion of an idol (a golden calf), a pattern that is often repeated, according to later biblical texts. God, however, forgives their transgression, and once again renews His covenant, giving them the laws by which they are to live and worship, summarized in the ten commandments. The story ends with the construction of the tabernacle in the desert, two years after their departure from Egypt.

Leviticus, often called the *Priests' Manual*, is a digression from the main events of the *Pentateuch*. It is a manual for the correct observance of cultic rituals and sacrifices, and an account of legislation regarding ritual purity and impurity, festivals, and many social laws. Of uncertain date, a number of scholars have suggested that it was written during the seventh century BCE.

Numbers returns to the main story. It begins with a census of the Israelites, and is chiefly concerned with their further adventures as they wander in the desert under the leadership of Moses. After an unsuccessful attempt to enter Canaan from the south, they spend a long time at Kadesh, before resuming their journey. Reaching the plains of Moab, near Jericho, the Midianites are defeated, and the tribes of Reuben and Gad settle in Transjordan. Interspersed between the various sections of the narrative are more laws, supplementing the Sinaitic code or in preparation for life in Canaan. *Numbers* became a part of the *Torah* during the fifth century BCE.

The last book of the *Pentateuch* is *Deuteronomy*. The Greek name, *Deuteronomion*, means 'second law', *i.e.* repetition of the law, from *deuteros* (second) law *(nomia)*. The work repeats the history and law recounted in the first four books. The majority of the book consists of three discourses by Moses, in the second of which a lengthy code of social and religious laws is inserted, partially restating the Sinaitic code. The discourses recall the history of the Israelites from the time they left Egypt, explaining the religious significance of events, emphasizing the importance of the law, and encouraging the people to remain faithful to *Yahweh*. The latter part of *Deuteronomy* deals with Moses' appointment of Joshua, his final blessings, and his death. The date of composition is difficult to determine, but the book is first mentioned in *2 Kings* in connection with its discovery in the Temple in 622 BCE.

Over the centuries and millennia, the *Genesis* and *Exodus* stories (in particular) have been variously interpreted by Jewish, Christian and Muslim commentators. The orthodox have generally tended towards a literal understanding, while the more mystically minded have inclined towards an allegorical interpretation. Thus, the garden of Eden is understood as the heavenly realms of creation, the serpent is the devil, Egypt is the physical universe where souls are enslaved by their corporeality, and so on. Some Jewish mystics have also provided mystical or spiritual interpretations of the many Jewish laws, social and religious, given in the *Torah*.

Although traditionally ascribed to Moses, an analysis of the books themselves suggests otherwise. Nowhere do any of the texts say that Moses was their author. In fact, they contain a number of things that Moses could not have written or was unlikely to have said. *Deuteronomy*, for instance, describes the death of Moses (34:5*ff.*), while *Numbers* says that Moses was the humblest man on earth (12:3). There are also contradictions in the text, and the same event is sometimes told twice in conflicting ways.

In *Genesis*, for example, Noah is told to take a single pair of each species aboard the ark (6:19–20). A little later, he is instructed to take seven pairs of birds and clean animals, and one pair of unclean animals (7:2–3). A third passage then relates that Noah actually took two of each species, regardless of their status, clean or unclean (7:8–9). In one place, it is said that 40 days of rain were followed by 14 days for the flood to subside (7:4, 12, 17; 8:6–11). Another place speaks of 150 days of rain and flood (7:11, 24; 8:3–4), with a year and ten days before Noah could disembark.

There are many other discrepancies, too. As biblical scholar Richard Friedman observes, "It would report events in a particular order, and later it would say that these events happened in a different order.... It would say that Moabites did something, and later it would say that it was the Midianites who did it. It would describe Moses as going to a tabernacle in a chapter before Moses built the tabernacle" (*WWB* pp.17–18).

A careful analysis of the books reveals that they are a compilation of a number of different sources, sometimes purporting to describe the same events – but with differing details. *Genesis*, for instance, consists of at least three sources. Firstly, there is a Judaean source (Y) that uses *Yahweh* as the name for God, dating perhaps from as early as 950 BCE. Here, contact with God is usually depicted as direct. Secondly, there is a source (E) traceable to the northern kingdom of Israel that speaks of God as *Elohim*, and written around 900–700 BCE. Here, contact with God is generally through an intermediary such as a dream or an angel. Sometime after the fall of the northern kingdom, these two sources were combined into one document.

Thirdly, there is a priestly source (P), concerned with cultic matters and priestly laws, generally dated to the fifth century BCE. This, too, was woven into the text, creating the book of *Genesis* in something like the form in which it is now known. Each of these sources contains elements drawn from prior oral and written traditions.

In *Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus* and *Numbers*, the priestly tradition is fairly easy to distinguish. In *Genesis*, the Yahwistic and Elohistic elements are also reasonably clearly differentiated. In *Exodus, Leviticus* and *Numbers*, however, it is difficult to determine which of the remainder belongs to which tradition. *Deuteronomy*, on the other hand, is written in such a different and distinctive style from the other four books that it is classed as a separate source (D) in its own right. It seems, therefore, that the books of the *Penta-*

teuch evolved over a period of time, with many of the details of their development remaining a matter of scholarly study and debate.

See also: **The Hebrew Bible and Other Texts** (1.4), **Sumerian and Mesopotamian Spirituality** (1.2).

Petelia Tablet A pre-Socratic, Orphic document from the fourth or third century BCE, found in excavations of a tomb in southern Italy, and now in the British Museum; written in Greek on a sheet of gold, about 45mm x 27mm in size; rolled up and enclosed in a hexagonal cylinder on a delicate gold chain, evidently intended to be worn as an amulet by the deceased, to provide protection and guidance in the underworld.

Philo Judaeus (*c.*20 BCE – 50 CE) A Greek-speaking Jewish philosopher of first-century Alexandria, Egypt; remembered for his integration of traditional Judaism with Greek philosophy and terminology, often interpreting biblical stories allegorically; a member of a noble family, whose father had been a prominent Jew in Palestine before moving to Alexandria; brother of Alexander Lysimachus, in charge of tax administration in Alexandria, and the wealthiest man in the city; a polymath, whose studies must have included all branches of Greek learning, including arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, harmonics, philosophy, grammar, rhetoric and logic; well-versed in the philosophy of Plato and the Stoics; believed in the creative power of the *Logos* as the bridge between God and man; attempted on one occasion to withdraw from busy city existence for the life of a contemplative, but finding himself unable to cope with the required discipline, returned to Alexandria and his literary pursuits; one of the two main sources of information on the esoteric Jewish group, the Essenes, for whom he had much admiration.

In about 40 CE, Philo headed a delegation to Rome to petition the tyrannical Emperor Caligula for the restoration of the rights granted to the Jews during the Ptolemaic rule of Egypt (305–30 BCE), confirmed during the long rule of Emperor Augustus (27 BCE – 14 CE), but taken away by order of Caligula (ruled 37–41 CE). The request was denied, but Philo advised his fellow delegates not to be troubled because God would punish Caligula, who was assassinated soon after.

Philo was a prolific writer, the author of over 30 books, many of which are extant. In works such as *Allegorical Interpretation* and *The Sacrifices of Cain and Abel,* he interprets the *Pentateuch* (the first five biblical books, attributed to Moses). In books like *Every Good Man who is Virtuous is also Free* and *On Providence,* he writes on general philosophical subjects. And in texts such as *On the Contemplative Life* (a description of the *Therapeutae*) and *On the Embassy to Gaius* (against Caligula), he addresses more contemporary issues.

Philokalia (Gk) *Lit.* love of the good, love of the Beautiful; an eighteenth-century collection of the prose writings (in Greek) of the desert fathers and other holy men of the Eastern Church dating from the fourth to the fifteenth centuries, including the previously unpublished works of all the major monks and hermits from Evagrius Ponticus (346–399) to Gregory Palamas (1296–1359); put together by two Greek monks, Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain of Athos (1749–1809) and Makarios of Corinth (1731–1805); originated as part of a movement towards spiritual rejuvenation in Eastern monasticism and the Orthodox Church. The *Philokalia* was first published in Venice in 1782. A second edition, with additional material on prayer by Patriarch Kallistos, was published in Athens in 1893, followed by a third five-volume edition, also published in Athens from 1957 to 1963.

The *Philokalia* has been enormously influential in Slavic countries, especially Russia, where a Church Slavonic version *(Dobrotolubiye)* was published in St Petersburg in 1793. The translator was the Russian monk and *starets* (spiritual teacher), Paisii Velichkovskii (1722–94), a spiritual reformer of Russian and Moldavian monasticism, who visited Mount Athos and later settled in Moldavia. The *Dobrotolubiye* became one of the most popular spiritual books in Russia during the nineteenth century. It is frequently mentioned in the novels of Dostoyevsky, himself an assiduous reader of the work. It was also the inspiration behind the author of the well-known book, *The Way of a Pilgrim.* A Russian translation by Ignatii Brianchaninov (1807–67) was published in 1857. The first volume of a further Russian translation, in five volumes, still with the title *Dobrotolubiye,* was published in 1877 by Theophan Zatvornik (Theophan the Recluse, 1815–94), former Bishop of Tambov. He included several texts absent from the original Greek, and omitted or paraphrased certain parts of the original Greek edition.

In Greece, outside certain monastic schools, the work has had less influence. An English translation of the *Philokalia,* in five volumes, has currently reached the fourth volume (1979, 1981, 1984, 1995). Romanian and French translations are also under way.

The *Philokalia* is a guide to the spiritual and contemplative, inner life, and the quest for *hesychia* (stillness). Much of the advice and philosophy it contains is relevant to anyone following a spiritual path, whatever religion they may profess, whether within or outside a monastic environment. Subjects include the daily recollection of personal mortality, and the constant remembrance of God. The *Philokalia* has been responsible for popularizing the 'Jesus prayer' as a means of constant recollection.

Philolaus A fifth-century (BCE) Pythagorean philosopher; born in southern Italy, and a part of the early Pythagorean movement whose headquarters were in Croton, where Pythagoras had taught; fled from Italy to Thēbes in Greece for some while because of local opposition to and violence against

the Pythagoreans; played a significant part in the science of his time, especially astronomy and mathematics; a student of the number theory attributed to Pythagoras.

Pīpā, Rāja (1408–68) An Indian mystic who had previously been the ruler of Gagaraungaṛh, near Koṭā, in Rajasthan; a disciple of Ravidās; one of his compositions is included in the *Ādi Granth*.

Pirkei Avot (He) *Lit.* ethics *(pirkei)* of the fathers *(avot);* a text of the *Mishnah;* a selection of sayings and stories of the rabbis, conveying ethical, moral, legendary and mystical teachings; traces the transmission of the rabbinic teachings from the revelation at Sinai to the generation of rabbis of the period following the destruction of the Second Temple (first century CE); often recited in the synagogue.

Pistis Sophia Also called the *Askew Codex;* a Coptic codex, measuring 210 x 165 mm, written on vellum (fine leather parchment) in the dialect of Upper Egypt; bought for ten pounds by the British Museum in 1785 from the heirs of the London doctor and antiquary, Dr Anthony Askew, who bought it from a London bookseller in 1772, its earlier provenance being unknown.

The codex is a compilation of four books. The first is untitled, but the second – a continuation of the first – is designated, *The Second Book of the Pistis Sophia,* the name by which the entire codex has come to be known. Part of the second book, together with the third, are designated "A Portion of the *Books of Saviour*", while the fourth book (similar in content to the third) is untitled.

Pistis Sophia is an allegory of the soul's descent into the material realm, and her rescue by the Saviour, Jesus. In the *Books of the Saviour,* Jesus is in conversation with his disciples, discoursing, telling stories and answering questions. Common themes are the treasury of Light, the vestures or robes of the soul, the inner realms or *(aeons)* and the inner mysteries, baptism or initiation, the five names, the Five Trees, the five *archons* (rulers), the great Name, the seven Voices, reincarnation, and much else of a gnostic character.

The earliest date of composition of these texts is probably the second century CE, although they may have been written as late as the third century.

Plato (*c.*427–347 BCE) One of the most renowned of the ancient Greek philosophers; born of noble and distinguished Athenian parents, Ariston and Perictionē; probably lost his father when he was a boy, his mother subsequently marrying her uncle, Pyrilampēs, a leading supporter of the statesman, Periclēs, who had died immediately prior to Plato's birth. Plato's mentor, Socratēs, was known to members of his mother's family. Critias and Charmidēs, the cousin and brother of Perictionē, were both acquainted with

Socratēs, and Plato probably knew him since childhood. Critias was later one of the more unprincipled of the 'thirty tyrants' who briefly governed Athens after the breakdown of the democracy.

When Socratēs was condemned to death in 399 BCE, Plato and a number of other disciples of Socratēs sought refuge with the philosopher and their fellow disciple, Eucleidēs of Megara. Subsequently, Plato travelled for some years in Greece, Egypt and Italy. In one of his letters (VII), he says that when he visited Italy and Sicily at the age of 40, he found the gross sensuality of their life abhorrent, although discovering a kindred spirit in Dion, the brother of one of the two wives of Dionysius I, ruler of the Sicilian city of Syracuse.

By 387 BCE, Plato must have been back in Athens, for that was the year that he founded his famous Academy, presiding over it for the remainder of his life. From the available evidence, it seems probable that the curriculum included the sciences, and subjects such as rhetoric, as well as philosophy. Although posterity remembers Plato for his writings, it seems that Plato himself placed more value on his Academy, where he could teach living philosophy to living students. Many of the significant natural scientists, biologists, mathematicians and legalists of the time were Plato's students. After his death, the orientation of the Academy changed, but it remained an intellectual focus in the Greek world for two and a half centuries. It remained open for nearly 1,000 years, before being closed by the Roman emperor, Justinian, in 529 CE, in the name of orthodox Christianity.

So far as is known, Plato largely steered clear of active involvement in politics. In 367, however, on the death of Dionysius I, he was invited back to Syracuse by his old friend, Dion, to tutor the poorly educated Dionysius II. The plan was to train the new ruler in philosophy and science, and so make him more fit to govern. Plato was not very enthusiastic, but acceded to his friend's desire. The plan fell through, however, when Dionysius, out of fear and jealousy, drove Dion into effective banishment. In 361–360, Plato paid a longer visit to Syracuse to try and effect a reconciliation, but to no avail. In 357, Dion effected a *coup,* but was murdered in 354. This seems to have been Plato's last foray into active politics.

Little is known of Plato as a person. Aristotle, Plato's most renowned student, writes that it would be blasphemy for base persons to even praise Plato, meaning that Plato's character was so upright that the ignoble should not even speak of him.

The works attributed to Plato are generally numbered as 36, the 13 letters being included as one item. All of these works are extant, although a few of the less significant works are considered by most modern scholars to be of dubious authenticity, and the majority of his letters are regarded as forgeries, except perhaps the seventh.

Many of Plato's dialogues seem to be built upon the mystical philosophy of Socratēs, discussing ethics, morals, social and political philosophy,

mythology, cosmology, and sometimes mysticism, using dialogue as the means of expression. Often, philosophy is explained in terms of the traditional mysteries. He speaks, for example, of the soul's essential immortality *(e.g. Phaedrus, Republic)*, its forgetfulness of its divine origins and its transmigration in other physical bodies *(e.g. Phaedo, Phaedrus, Republic, Timaeus)*, of a just recompense for the good or bad deeds of human life *(e.g. Republic)*, of initiation into the mysteries *(e.g. Phaedo)*, of learning to die well *(e.g. Phaedo)*, of the *Logos (e.g. Phaedo, Phaedrus, Republic)*, of the Music of the Spheres *(e.g. Timaeus)*, of the creation of the world *(e.g. Timaeus)*, and of material existence as founded upon a realm of eternal 'absolutes', from which the transient world comes into existence *(Republic)*.

Although Plato had known Socratēs, and was deeply influenced by him, it is unclear to what extent he was a disciple of the philosopher. In a number of Plato's dialogues, Socratēs plays no part, perhaps because Plato is presenting ideas in these works that were entirely his own, and he did not wish them to be understood as the philosophy of Socratēs. Scholars sometimes suggest that the non-Socratic dialogues were a part of Plato's later work, and that as his thought evolved, he explored other fields of study. In fact, since Plato himself never appears as a character in his dialogues, it is difficult to know the nature of his personal philosophy. In many instances, it seems that he is simply exploring or presenting ideas that he himself may or may not have personally espoused. But there is no certainty to any of these speculations. Though Western philosophers since the Renaissance have liked to view Plato purely as an intellectual, tradition closer to his own time dubbed him, the "divine Plato", viewing him as a mystical philosopher and a Pythagorean.

See also: **Socratēs and Plato** (1.9).

Pliny the Elder (23–79 CE) Full name, Gaius Plinius Secundus; remembered as the author of the encyclopaedic *Natural History;* born into a wealthy family and studied in Rome; remained unmarried throughout his life; joined the Roman army at 23, and was posted to Germany, where he served with Vespasian, rising to the rank of military commander; returned to Rome, devoting himself to his studies, until towards the end of Nero's reign (54–68), when he was made procurator (governor) of Spain; returned to official duties in Rome after Vespasian became emperor in 69. While commander of the fleet in the Bay of Naples, assigned to deal with a piracy problem, Pliny heard of an unusual 'cloud formation'. Going ashore to investigate and reassure the frightened citizens, he was overcome by the fumes of the erupting Mount Vesuvius, and died, along with many others.

Pliny's *Natural History* was used as a scientific and medical authority until the Middle Ages. His strength was his attention to detail, and the ability

to organize previously unrelated information, all woven with interesting fables and stories. His work, including magic and superstition, remained unchallenged partly because there was no other source of information, and partly because many of his assertions remained untested or were untestable. His work was first seriously questioned in 1492, in a treatise concerning the errors of Pliny, by the Italian, Niccolò Leoniceno, after which his influence increasingly declined.

Plotinus (*c.*205–270 BCE) A philosopher and mystic, generally regarded as the founder of Neo-Platonism.

See **Plotinus and the Neo-Platonists** (1.9).

Plutarch (*c.*46–119 CE) A Greek writer and biographer; son of Aristobulus, also a biographer; married with at least four sons; studied philosophy and mathematics in Athens; travelled widely throughout Greece, also visiting Asia Minor, Alexandria and Rome, where he seems to have become acquainted with the emperors Trajan and Hadrian; lived in Chaeronea, where he occupied several official positions, and ran a school offering a broad range of studies with philosophy, especially ethics, as a primary focus; was closely associated with the Academy at Athens and with Delphi, where (from 95 onward) he held a priesthood (presumably part time); well-loved and respected in his own time, and by posterity.

Plutarch is said to have written of over 200 works, of which two are the most significant. *Bioi paralleloi* ('Parallel Lives') is a collection of biographies of Greek and Roman personalities, arranged in pairs (of which 22 have survived) according to their similarities, with frequent ethical and anecdotal digressions, designed to create mutual respect between Greeks and Romans. *Moralia* ('Moral's') is a compilation of more than 60 essays mostly in the form of dialogues or diatribes on physical, political, literary, ethical and religious topics, including *The Ei at Delphi.*

Plutarch's basic philosophy was Platonism, with borrowings from the Pythagoreans, Stoics and Peripatetics. He had a mystical side, believing in the immortality of the soul, and was an initiate of the mysteries of the Dionysian school.

Porphyry (*c.*232–305 CE) A Syrian philosopher and writer, born in Tyre, whose original name was Malchus (*lit.* king), his name having been Hellenized by Cassius Longinus, with whom he studied rhetoric in Athens (*porphyros* means 'purple', an allusion to the purple robes of a king); came to Rome where, in 263, he met the philosopher-mystic, Plotinus (*c.*205–270); recorder and arranger of the teachings of Plotinus in the *Enneads,* to which he added a short biography, the *Life of Plotinus.*

Porphyry wrote voluminously and carefully on philosophy, religion, philology and science. As well as the *Enneads*, he is remembered for his commentary on Aristotle's *Categories*, which was influential in the development of logic in medieval times. Surviving fragments of *Against the Christians*, a book condemned to burning in 448, indicate Porphyry's antithesis to the new religion. He also wrote a *Life of Pythagoras* and *On Abstinence from Animal Food*, in support of vegetarianism. He was also a teacher of the Syrian Neo-Platonist, Iamblichus.

See also: **Plotinus and the Neo-Platonists** (1.9).

Prajñāpāramitās (S) *Lit.* perfection *(pāramitā)* of wisdom *(prajñā)*, transcendent wisdom; sometimes called the 'wisdom texts' or the 'wisdom literature' of Buddhism; a body of *sūtras* and their commentaries believed to have been composed between 100 BCE and 150 CE, containing the teachings of the oldest of the major forms of *Mahāyāna* Buddhism, extending the *Mahāyāna* concept of *shūnyatā* (voidness, emptiness) and elevating *prajñā*, part of the Buddha's original eightfold path, to the supreme position and the primary road to *nirvāṇa*.

In Buddhism, *prajñā* refers to the wisdom that perceives the illusory nature of the transient world. In the *Prajñāpāramitās*, the meaning is extended to cover the illusion of the heavenly worlds as well. The *Prajñāpāramitā* movement began as an attempt to break free from the intellectuality which had engulfed Buddhism. Later on, however, scholarly commentaries on the *Prajñāpāramitās* were written in the *Mādhyamika* monasteries of eastern India, thus re-introducing the same intellectual complexity they had originally sought to escape.

The best-known of the *Prajñāpāramitās* is the *Ashṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, consisting of eight thousand *(ashṭasāhasrikā)* verses, first translated into Chinese in 179 CE. Eighteen smaller wisdom texts or portable editions were later derived from the *Prajñāpāramitās*, the best known of which is the *Vajrachhedikā Sūtra (Diamond Sūtra)*.

Prajñāpāramitā also became personified as a goddess, and Indian images of her are described by the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim, Fă Hsiĕn, as early as 400 CE. In India, images survive that date back to the ninth century, and are still found in Nepal, Tibet and Southeast Asia. In Tantric Buddhism, the goddess appears as the consort of the *Ādi-Buddha* (primal Buddha). Images of her are generally yellow or white; her two hands (sometimes more) are in the teaching *mudrā* (posture) or may hold a lotus and a sacred text. Often she has with her a rosary (symbolizing meditation), a sword (to cut away ignorance), a thunderbolt (*vajra*, symbolizing the *shūnyatā*) or a begging bowl (symbolizing the renunciation necessary for the acquisition of wisdom).

See also: **Buddhism** (1.12).

Prasannapadā (S) *Lit.* the clear- *(prasanna)* worded *(pāda);* a commentary by Chandrakīrti (*c.*600–650 CE) on the *Madhyamaka Kārikā* of the Buddhist sage Nāgārjuna. Chandrakīrti was the principal representative of the *Prāsangika* school of Buddhist logic. His *Prasannapadā* became the most authoritative commentary on Nāgārjuna, and is the only commentary that has been preserved in Sanskrit. Others only survive in Tibetan translation.

Prashna Upanishad (S) Belonging to the *Atharva Veda:* derives its name from *prashna* meaning 'question'; presented as a sequence of answers to six questions put by different disciples to the *ṛishi,* Pippalāda, discussing the nature of *prāṇa* (understood as the essential life force animating all creation); meditation on *Om* (as a symbol of *Brahman*); and realization of the one supreme Being *(Purusha)* who lies within.

See also: **Upanishads**.

Preaching of Andrew An apocryphal text, of uncertain date, purporting to recount the missionary activities of the apostle Andrew among the Kurds; extant in Ethiopic and Arabic, with some variations between the two; this text is different from the Greek *Acts of Andrew.*

Proverbs One of the three biblical books of canonical Wisdom Literature, containing wisdom poems and many moral sayings concerning the development of wisdom *(ḥokhmah);* in other poems and proverbs, Wisdom is personified and identified with the divine creative Power of *Yahweh.* Traditionally attributed to King Solomon, though comprised of several parts of different authorship, the present form of the book is normally dated to the sixth century BCE, though including earlier material.

Psalms One of the three biblical books of canonical Wisdom Literature, containing a collection of 150 psalms written over a period of time, compiled and arranged in their present form around the third century BCE. Traditionally ascribed to King David (C11th–C10th BCE), some of the psalms may indeed have originated in David's time.

Psalms of Solomon A pseudo-epigraphic work comprising 18 psalms, originally composed in Hebrew, now surviving in only Greek and Syriac translations, and consisting of hymns, psalms of thanksgiving and lamentation, and poems of moral and spiritual exhortation. Those concerned with moral and spiritual issues are difficult to date; those containing references to Pompey's conquest of Rome in 63 BCE, and the subsequent demise of the Judaean Hasmonean dynasty, can be dated to the mid- to late-first century BCE.

Pseudo-Aristotle See **On the Cosmos**.

Purāṇas (S) *Lit.* ancient, old, of ancient times; hence, ancient lore; sacred Hindu texts, often large and encyclopaedic, comprising myth, legend and genealogy, including accounts of the origin, destruction and renewal of the universe, together with legends concerning the lives, deeds and sagas of gods, saints, ascetics, heroes and royal dynasties; generally written in narrative couplets in a flowing style.

There are 18 principal *Purāṇas,* of greatly varying provenance and date, most of which are estimated to have originated between 400 BCE and 500 CE, and are roughly divided into those exalting *Vishṇu, Shiva* or *Brahmā,* although each school has tried to be included in all the more popular *Purāṇas.* The best known is the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa,* especially the tenth book, which tells the story of Kṛishṇa's childhood. There are also 18 lesser *Purāṇas (Upapurāṇas),* as well as a considerable body of *sthala-Purāṇas* or *mahātmyas,* extolling the virtues of various temples or holy places, and used in temple services.

The *Purāṇas* gained in popularity because they were accessible to everyone, including women and members of the lowest caste, unlike the *Vedas* which could only be read by initiated men of the three higher castes. The *Purāṇas* were also accepted by the *brāhmaṇs,* who – although not the main writers of the *Purāṇas* – nevertheless used them to some extent to introduce new elements into their religion. The *Purāṇas* also reflected and influenced the roles occupied by the various deities in Puranic times. In the *Ṛig Veda,* for instance, *Indra* is chief of the gods and a divine warrior, as well as god of the sky and rain, but by the time of the *Purāṇas,* his role was much diminished, and he was understood mostly as the rain god, and so he appears in the *Purāṇas. Vishṇu* and *Shiva,* on the other hand, are comparatively minor Vedic deities, but their enhanced stature in the *Purāṇas* reflects the more significant place they occupied in Indian religion of those times.

See also: **Bhāgavata Purāṇa**.

Qāshānī, 'Abd al-Razzāq al- (*d.*1329) A Sufi of the school of Ibn 'Arabī; believed to have been a disciple of Mu'ayyid al-Dīn al-Jandī (*d.*1291, a disciple of al-Qūnawī, the successor of Ibn 'Arabī); however, Jāmī says in *Nafaḥāt al-Uns* ('Fragment Breaths of the Intimate') that he was a disciple of Nūr al-Dīn 'Abd al-Ṣamad and a contemporary of Rukn al-Dīn 'Alā' al-Dawlah al-Simnānī (*d.*1336); author of a well-known commentary on Ibn 'Arabī's *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* and also *Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Ṣūfīyah* ('Dictionary of Sufism'); one of the Sufis who brought some clarity to the teachings of Ibn 'Arabī, helping Ibn 'Arabī's writings to become well-known in the Muslim world.

Qāshānī, 'Izz al-Dīn Maḥmūd ibn 'Alī (*d.*1353) Sufi author of *Miṣbāḥ al-Hidāyah wa-Miftāḥ al-Kifāyah* ('Lamp of Right Guidance and Key to What is Sufficient'), written in Persian, and based on Shihāb al-Dīn Abū Ḥafṣ 'Umar al-Suhravardī's *'Awārif al-Ma'ārif* ('Gifts of Divine Knowledge'), which Qāshānī slightly rearranged and added new material, and which contains such chapters as "How the disciple *(murīd)* should behave towards his Master *(Shaykh).*"

Qayṣarī, Dā'ūd al- (*d.*1350) A disciple of al-Qāshānī; author of a well-known commentary *(sharḥ)* on Ibn 'Arabī's *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam,* which includes an extensive and well-organized introduction to Sufi philosophy; one of the Sufis who brought some clarity to the teachings of Ibn 'Arabī, helping Ibn 'Arabī's writings to become well-known in the Muslim world.

Qūnawī, Ṣadr al-Dīn al- (*d.*1274) A Persian Sufi who lived in Konya (now in Turkey); the stepson and successor of his stepfather, Ibn 'Arabī; a lucid writer who systematized the teachings of Ibn 'Arabī, setting the scene for their later popularity throughout the Islamic world; two of his more well-known disciples were Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī and Fakhr al-Dīn al-'Irāqī; an intimate friend and colleague of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī in Konya.

Qur'ān (A) The holy book of Islam, revealed to the Prophet Muḥammad.

See **The Qur'ān** (1.10).

Qushayrī, Abū al-Qāsim 'Abd al-Karīm al- (986–1074) An early Persian Sufi; a disciple of Daqqāq; author of *Risālah,* a treatise on Sufism, and a mystical commentary on the *Qur'ān;* quoted on several occasions by al-Hujwīrī in *Kashf al-Maḥjūb* ('Unveiling of the Hidden'), where al-Hujwīrī eulogizes, "In his time he was a wonder. His rank is high and his position is great, and his spiritual life and manifold virtues are well known to the people of the present age. He is the author of many fine sayings and exquisite works, all of them profoundly theosophical, in every branch of science" (*Kashf al-Maḥjūb* XII, *KM* p.167).

Quṭb al-Dīn Bakhtiyār Kākī, Khwājah (*d.*1235) A renowned Indian Sufi of Delhi; a disciple of Mu'īn al-Dīn Chishtī and the *Shaykh* of Shaykh Farīd.

Rābi'ah al-'Adawīyah (*c.*717–801) Born in Baṣrah, now in Iraq; also known as Rābi'ah Baṣrī; one of the best-known mystics of Islam; born – according to the traditional story – into a poor family, and sold into slavery following the death of her parents in a famine; given her freedom when her owner saw a great light hovering over her while she was praying; said to have lived a

simple life, focusing on prayer and meditation; credited with having introduced divine love into Sufism, converting its asceticism to mysticism. The sayings and poems attributed to her have remained popular in the Islamic world, some being invoked as proverbs to this day. Poems attributed to her frequently emphasize *maḥabbah* (divine love) and *uns* (intimacy with God).

Rāmakṛishṇa (1836–86) Also called Gadādhar Chaṭṭopādhyāya; an Indian mystic around whom so much legend has accumulated that it is difficult to distinguish fact from fiction; born in Kamarpukur, in West Bengal to a poor *brāhmaṇ* family; had little education, spoke a rough Bengali dialect, and learnt neither English nor Sanskrit; first experienced God-intoxication at the age of seven; became a priest at the temple of Kālī at Dakshiṇeshvar near Calcutta, worshipping her as the divine Mother and highest manifestation of God. Yearning for Kālī to manifest herself, he passed long periods in tears, experiencing a burning sensation all over his body (*cf.* Richard Rolle). He was subjected to exorcism and various medical treatments, but to no avail. Subsequently, he found peace and ecstasy in visions of Kālī, whom he once described as "a limitless, effulgent ocean of spirit".

Rāmakṛishṇa refused the education offered by his elder brother, a Sanskrit scholar, on the grounds that he wished to know God by direct experience rather than through books. He believed that sex and the desire for money were primary hindrances in the way of spiritual enlightenment. At 23, hoping to 'stabilize' him, his family married him to Shāradā Devī, but the marriage was never consummated because of his celibacy.

After his marriage, Rāmakṛishṇa practised asceticism for 12 years, experiencing various states of *samādhi* (transcendent consciousness). He learnt tantric *yoga*. He also became a Vaishnavite (devotee of *Vishṇu*), and experienced a vision of Kṛishṇa (regarded as an incarnation of *Vishṇu*). He was initiated as a *sannyāsin* (renunciate) by Swāmī Totāpurī, who taught him *Advaita Vedānta,* and he rapidly achieved the *nirvikalpa samādhi* (union with *Brahman*). At this point, he took the new name Rāmakṛishṇa.

When he studied and practised Islam, he reputedly had a vision of Muḥammad; when he studied Christianity, he likewise had a vision of Jesus. From all these experiences, he came to believe that all religions are true and essentially the same. He compared them to the steps leading into tank of water, from which everyone draws the same liquid, but which Hindus call *'jal',* Muslims *'pānī'* and Christians 'water'.

As his visions and teachings became known, his fame spread throughout India, and thousands gathered at his Calcutta home to hear him speak. He was never a writer, but his disciples collected his sayings into several volumes. The philosophy he taught was spread by his disciples, such as Shāradā Devī and Swāmī Vivekānanda, the latter being the first to take his message to America and the Western world, in 1893. Rāmakṛishṇa died in Calcutta

in 1896. In 1897, Swāmī Vivekānanda founded the Ramakrishna Mission, dedicated to social service in India and to teaching the philosophy of Rāmakṛishṇa. At the present time, the Mission has many centres worldwide.

Rāmānuja (*c.*1017–1137) A well-known Hindu philosopher of South India, belonging to the *Vaishṇava* tradition; born in Shrīperumbudur and settled in Shrīrangam, after a long pilgrimage, where he taught the path of devotion *(bhakti)* to the deity, *Vishṇu,* organizing temple worship and founding centres; the foremost thinker of devotional Hinduism; a reformer and author of several treatises on *Vedānta,* founding the school of *Vishishṭa Advaita* (qualified non-dualism). His works include a voluminous commentary on the *Brahma Sūtras* known as *Shrī Bhāshya* ('Great Commentary'); a commentary on the *Bhagavad Gītā (Bhagavad Gītā Bhāshya);* a work named *Gadyatraya* ('Prose Triad'); the *Vedārtha Sangraha* ('Collection of Vedic Meanings'); an exposition of the *Vaishṇava* philosophy and religion; and two other shorter books, *Vedāntasāra* ('Essence of *Vedānta*') and *Vedāntadīpa* ('Light on *Vedānta*').

See also: **Vedānta** (1.11).

Rāma Uttara Tāpanīya Upanishad (S) *Lit.* the later *(uttara)* (part) of the *Upanishad* regarding ascetic self-sacrifice *(tāpanīya)* to *Rāma,* a mythological incarnation of the deity *Vishṇu;* consists mostly of passages taken from other *Upanishads.*

See also: **Upanishads**.

Rāmāyaṇa (S) An epic poem, the first poetic work in classical Sanskrit, traditionally ascribed to the legendary Ṛishi Vālmīki; of uncertain date, ascribed by different scholars to varying dates between the sixth millennium BCE and the fourth century CE, but – based on internal linguistic, stylistic, cultural, political and geographical evidence – believed to have been composed (not necessarily all at the same time or by the same author) before the time of the Buddha (*c.*560–480 BCE), probably some time between 750 and 500 BCE.

The *Rāmāyaṇa,* overflowing throughout with colourful imagery, recounts the childhood and youth of prince Rāmachandra; how he is tricked out of inheriting his father's kingdom; his years of voluntary exile in the forests with his devoted wife, Sītā, and his steadfast brother, Lakshmaṇa; the abduction of Sītā by the demon, Rāvaṇa, king of Lankā; Rāma's alliance with Hanumān, loyal general of the monkey kingdom; the subsequent war and rescue of Sītā; the restoration of Rāma's throne; followed by the alienation of Rāma and Sītā, her time in a tranquil forest hermitage with the

Ṛishi Vālmīki, and the birth of twin sons to Rāma and Sītā; and their final reconciliation.

The *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* are the two greatest epics of Indian literature, both enjoying immense popularity. Translated into the many Indian vernaculars, their stories have been a major source of guidance in morality and social conduct, and have provided inspiration in drama, dance, art, sculpture and all aspects of Indian culture for two or three millennia. The stories have also spread throughout southeast Asia, where they have exercised something of the same cultural influence as in India. Scenes from the *Rāmāyaṇa* are even carved on many Indonesian monuments.

See also: **The Rāmāyaṇa, the Mahābhārata and the Bhagavad Gītā** (1.11).

Rām Charit Mānas (H) *Lit.* sacred lake *(Mānas)* of the deeds *(charit)* of *Rām;* a masterpiece of medieval Hindi literature, written by Tulsīdās, notable for its expression of divine love; instrumental in strengthening the worship of *Rām* as an incarnation of *Vishṇu* throughout much of North India; written around 1575, in seven cantos, although the earliest extant manuscript dates from about 100 years later.

See also: **Tulsīdās**.

Rāmdās A seventeenth-century Maharashtran Saint *(Sant)* and contemporary of Tukārām; the author of thousands of devotional poems, many of which are collectively published in Marathi under the title of *Dās Bodh – lit.* the realization *(bodh)* of a slave *(dās);* not to be confused with *Guru Rāmdās,* the fourth Sikh *Guru.*

Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' (A) *Lit.* the Treatises *(Rasā'il)* of the Brotherhood *(Ikhwān)* of Purity *(Ṣafā');* a 51–part encyclopaedia consisting of philosophy, theology, metaphysics, cosmology and the natural sciences. The Brotherhood of Purity was a secret society founded in Baṣrah around 951, associated with the Ismā'īlī gnostic movement. Their philosophy was linked to self-knowledge, the liberation of the soul from the material world, and the return to God. Although their works were officially condemned and burned in 1160, by order of the Caliph, the wide influence of the *Rasā'il* has continued.

Ravidās, Guru (*c.*1414–1540) Also known as Raidās, Rohidās, and other regional variants; an Indian Saint *(Sant),* born near Vārāṇasī, Uttar Pradesh, of whose life history, little is certain; probably poorly educated; showed early signs of a devotional temperament; married by his family at an early age in an unsuccessful attempt to interest him in worldly affairs; a contempo-

rary of Guru Nānak and Kabīr, still living when Kabīr died in 1518; probably a disciple of Kabīr, although he is also associated with Rāmānand; believed to have lived to an advanced age, through there is considerable debate concerning his exact dates, variants including 1376–1527, 1399–1527 and 1414–1540.

Ravidās records in his poetry that he is a cobbler, making and repairing shoes, using "leather bought from the market". In India of those times, animals were not killed for their hides. Tradition records that his generosity towards Saints, holy men and poor people was such that he would offer them shoes at a nominal price or at no price at all. This is said to have irritated his father so much that he made Ravidās and his wife live in the back yard of the family house.

Ravidās travelled widely, visiting Rajasthan, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, and a number of places in North India, teaching the path of the Word, and presenting his teachings in a spirit of gentle persuasion and humble submission. His disciples included Rāja Pīpā, a Rajput king of Gagaraungaṛh, as well as Mīrābāī, princess of Mewāṛ. According to tradition, Mīrābāī tried to give Ravidās a diamond to save herself from being ridiculed for having a poor low-caste cobbler as her *Guru*. He, however, declined the gift, saying that he had sufficient divine treasures.

Forty of his poems are included in the *Ādi Granth*, one of which is a repetition. His poetry expresses his great love and devotion for God, echoing the ecstasy and the agony of his personal experience. In keeping with the miraculous legends that surround many Saints, when Ravidās died, he is said to have simply disappeared from the world, leaving only his footprints (supposedly preserved at Chittor). Others believe he died a normal death, at an advanced age, in Vārāṇasī.

Ra'aya Meheimna (Ar) *Lit.* the faithful *(meheimna)* shepherd *(ra'aya)* – a reference to Moses; a work on the Kabbalistic significance of the biblical commandments in which a number of mystics and scholars of antiquity have a vision of Moses and other personalities of the celestial world, who explain the spiritual meaning of the commandments; an imitation of the *Zohar* written at the end of the thirteenth or beginning of the fourteenth centuries, eventually incorporated into the *Zohar* itself.

See also: **Zohar**.

Revelations See **Book of Revelation**.

Richard Rolle de Hampole (*c.*1300–49) Born in Thornton-le-Dale, Yorkshire, in England; died at Hampole, near Doncaster, in Yorkshire; an English mystic, ascetic and writer; went up to Oxford University, sponsored finan-

cially by Thomas Neville, Archdeacon of Durham, but left without completing his studies; back in Yorkshire, he left home after making a hermit's attire out of his father's rain hood and two of his sister's frocks ("one white and the other grey"); found refuge the following day on the estate of John de Dalton, squire of Dalton and Constable of Pickering Castle, who provided him with food, suitable clothes and a hermit's cell, although not at the time licensed or blessed by a bishop as a hermit.

Richard's extremes soon aroused the hostility of the local monks and clergy, whom he roundly rebukes in his *Judica me, Deus* ('Judge me, God') and *Melos amoris* ('Song of Love'). He seems to have possessed a rugged independence which saw him through a wandering life and many changes of patron, while staying in contact with a number of religious communities in the north. Mellowing as he matured, by his death he was spiritual director of the Cistercian convent in Hampole, where he died, possibly of the Black Death, which was ravaging Europe at that time.

Richard Rolle is remembered for his rich and varied prose and poetry, especially his devotional, *Incendium amoris* (*Fire of Love,* 1343). The work opens with a description of the sensation of burning in his body which accompanied his ecstasies (*cf.* Rāmakṛishṇa), and goes on to extol the virtues of contemplation and solitude, describing the ecstasies of the inner life and union with God. Other works include a commentary on the *Song of Songs.* He is not, however, the author of all the works ascribed to him. He clearly enjoyed the use of words, and his vital and energetic English is regarded by some as more readable than his somewhat rhetorical Latin. He was a pioneer of writing in the vernacular. Known as St Richard Hermit (though never canonized), he became the centre of a cult, and 30 years or so after his death, miracles were reported at his grave. The cult endured, and he remained influential until the time of the Reformation in the sixteenth century.

Ṛig Veda (S) See **Vedas**.

Robe of Glory Also called the *Hymn of the Pearl;* an allegorical poem, extant in Syriac and Greek and found in the *Acts of Thomas,* relating the gnostic story of the soul's descent into this world, its experiences here, and its eventual rescue by a Saviour; often attributed to the Syrian gnostic, Bar Daisan (155–233), although the authorship is uncertain.

See also: **Acts of Thomas**.

Romans See **Galatians**.

Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925) An Austrian-born philosopher and educationalist, born in Kraljevic; from 1889–96, editor of the complete works of Goethe,

in the German city of Weimar; thereafter, moved to Berlin to become editor of the literary journal, *Magazin für Literatur;* founder of the Anthroposophical Society in 1912, at Dornach, near Basel, in Switzerland, the underlying philosophy being that there exists a spiritual world that can be understood and experienced by a purified mind, with spiritual senses functioning independently of their physical counterparts; built his first school at Dornach in 1913, which he described as a 'school of spiritual science'. Steiner's educational work is the basis of the Waldorf school movement, which by 1969 had around 80 schools in Europe and the USA. A number of other specialist schools and teaching methods are based upon his work. Steiner's varied literary output includes *The Philosophy of Spiritual Activity* (1894), *Occult Science: An Outline* (1913) and *The Story of My Life* (1924).

Rufinus (*c*.345–410) Born at Concordia, near Aquileia, in Italy; educated in Rome, where he met Jerome (*c*.347–420); entered a monastery at Aquileia, frequently visited by Jerome, where they became good friends. Rufinus and Jerome lived at a time when Latin was replacing Greek as the *lingua franca* in the West, and both were to become major translators of texts from Greek to Latin. Jerome is known especially for his translation of the Bible into Latin (the *Vulgate*).

Around 373, Rufinus began a study of the writings of Origen, one of the earliest Christian fathers to introduce elements of Greek philosophy into Christian theology. A few years later, when Jerome had acquired a better grasp of Greek, he too studied Origen, for whom he developed a high regard, translating a number of Origen's sermons on the Old Testament into Latin. By the early 390s, however, Origen was suspected of entertaining heretical elements and, in 393, Rufinus and Jerome were charged with Origenist tendencies. Jerome readily admitted his fault and retracted, but Rufinus did not, and an on-going quarrel developed between them. By 397, it had abated, but when Rufinus published a Latin translation of Origen's *De principiis* ('On First Principles'), with a preface describing Jerome as an admirer of Origen, the row flared up a second time. Jerome never forgave Rufinus, subjecting him to constant abuse thereafter. Suspected of unorthodoxy, Rufinus was summoned to Rome by Pope Anastasius, and had to write an official apology.

Rufinus then devoted himself to literary pursuits. His translations included many of Origen's biblical commentaries and homilies, sermons by Gregory of Nazianus (*c*.329–389, Bishop of Caesarea) and Basil the Great, and Eusebius' *History of the Church.* None of his works have survived *in toto,* however. Rufinus' stated method was to paraphrase or edit his sources whenever they seemed to him to deviate from orthodox doctrine, something which he justified as correcting the errors of previous redactors of his subject's work. In fact, whenever both the original Greek still exists and is

compared with Rufinus' translation, it is clear that his translations tend to be a very free rendering of the original. As a result, they are viewed with some caution by modern scholars. Among his own writings are a commentary on the Apostle's Creed, providing an example of the instruction given to new converts at that time. He died in Sicily, possibly at Messina.

See also: **Apocryphal Sources** (1.5), **reincarnation and transmigration (in Christianity)** (6.3).

Rūmī, Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn (1207–73) Born at Balkh in Khurāsān, in northeastern Iran; his family settled in Iconium (now Konya) in Rūm (now Turkey), hence his epithet; known in India as Mawlānā Rūm; regarded as the greatest Sufi mystic and poet in the Persian language. Few details are known of Rūmī's life. His father, Bahā' al-Dīn Walad, was a well-known author and teacher of mystical theology, who moved from Balkh in about 1218 owing to the threat of invading Mongols. After a pilgrimage to Mecca and various Middle Eastern travels, Bahā' al-Dīn and his family arrived at Laranda, in Rūm, a country still enjoying peace and prosperity under Turkish Saljūq rule. There is a traditional story that, during their travels, they met the great Persian poet and mystic Farīd al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār, who was much impressed by the young Rūmī, and blessed him. Soon after their arrival in Rūm, Rūmī's mother died. Moving to the capital, Konya, in 1228, Bahā' al-Dīn taught at one of the many religious schools. When he died in 1231, the young Rūmī took his place.

In Konya, Rūmī's spiritual life was greatly influenced by one of his father's former students, Sayyid Burhān al-Dīn Muḥaqqiq. He is also believed to have travelled to Syria, where he may have met Ibn 'Arabī, whose stepson, Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī, was Rūmī's close friend and colleague in Konya. In 1244, in his late thirties, Rūmī met the wandering dervish, Shams al-Dīn of Tabrīz, whom he may have previously met in Syria. Shams is not associated with any of the usual Sūfī orders, and has remained a mystery character, but he seems to have opened up Rūmī's mystical life in a dramatic manner. For many months, Rūmī could hardly be separated from his beloved Master, and he so neglected his family and students that they finally forced Shams to leave town. Rūmī was desolate, and his eldest son, Sulṭān Walad, went to Syria to persuade Shams to return. The jealousy continued, however, and one night in 1246, Shams disappeared, believed to have been murdered.

Experiencing the ache of divine longing, Rūmī turned to poetry, composing his *Rubā'īyāts* and the *Dīvān-i Shams-i Tabrīz*. His classic masterpiece, the *Maśnavī,* addressed to his disciple and successor-to-be, Ḥusām al-Dīn Chelebī, comprises 27,500 distichs (rhyming couplets), and consists of six books of stories, dialogues and discourses written in a lyrical and

entertaining style, replete with a rich imagery. It is said that he would often compose verses in the bath, or while out walking, and Ḥusām al-Dīn would write them down.

Soon after completion of the *Maśnavī*, Rūmī died. Ḥusām al-Dīn's successor was Rūmī's eldest son, Sulṭān Walad, who founded the *Mawlawīyah* or *Mevlevī* order of Sufis, known in the West as the 'whirling dervishes' on account of their ritual dance. Sulṭān Walad's poetry is the most important source of information concerning Rūmī's life.

Apart from his poetry, Rūmī's other writings include *Maktūbāt* ('Divine Inscriptions'), *Majālis-i Sab'ah* ('Assemblies of the Seven'), *Fīhi mā Fīhi* (*lit.* in it what is in it, a collection of discourses and conversations), and some letters. His writings have had a powerful influence in both the East and West, where he has become one of the best-known Sufis. His influence on Sufi poetry and Turkish culture has been immense. His mausoleum, the Green Dome, now a museum in Konya, remains a place of pilgrimage, visited by thousands.

Rūzbihān, Ibn Abī Naṣr al-Fasā'ī al-Daylamī al-Baqlī al-Shīrāzī Ṣadr al-Dīn Abū Muḥammad (1128–1209) A Persian Sufi author, initiated into a branch of the *Kādharūnī Ṭarīqah;* taught for 50 years in the mosque of Shīrāz, establishing a meeting place for Sufis. Although his own order, the *Ṭarīqah Rūzbihānīyah,* did not endure, his mystical commentary on the *Qur'ān* is studied up to the present time in Central Asia, in previously Ottoman territories and in India. Among his writings on Sufism are the *Sharḥ-i Shaṭḥīyāt* ('Commentary on Ecstatic Utterances'); a Persian translation of the *Manṭiq al-Asrār* ('Pronouncement of Mysteries'), an Arabic collection of ecstatic sayings, with a commentary and lexicon of Sufi terminology; *Kashf al-Asrār* ('Disclosure of Hidden Secrets'), a spiritual autobiography in Arabic, written in 1181–82; and *Mashrab al-Arwāḥ* ('Drink of Souls'), an Arabic treatise on 1,001 spiritual states *(aḥwāl).*

Sa'adia Ga'on (*c.*882–942) Full name, Sa'adia ben Joseph; a Jewish scholar, philosopher, author, grammarian and leader of Babylonian Jewry; one of the most significant Jewish scholars of his time; born in Pithom, in the al-Fayyūm region of Egypt. Little is known of Sa'adia's parents and early life. His father was probably not a scholar, but earned his living by manual labour. Sa'adia was married and the father of children. Before leaving Egypt, he was already an established scholar of the *Torah* and secular sciences, with many students, and had composed an Arabic–Hebrew dictionary, later revised.

After leaving Egypt (for unknown reasons), he lived and studied for a while in Palestine. Here, he encountered a growing community of Karaites, a group who rejected the *Talmud,* and who were supported by the local

Muslim authorities. The *Talmud* contains several centuries' worth of rabbinic interpretation of Jewish law and lore.

From a surviving fragment of a letter, it seems that he was in Aleppo (in northwest Syria) in 921, from where he travelled to Baghdad, which became his home for the remainder of his life. In Baghdad, Sa'adia again encountered the Karaites, as well as further deviations from orthodox Judaism in the form of gnosticism. His response was to write a number of polemical works defending orthodox Judaism against the Karaite and gnostic 'heresies'. He believed that the Talmudic tradition of rabbinic interpretation was essential in order to make sense of the otherwise confusing elements in the law of Moses.

Soon after his arrival in Baghdad, he became the leading protagonist of the Babylonian Jews in an acrimonious dispute with Aaron ben Me'ir, head of the Palestinian academy. Aaron advocated far-reaching changes to the Jewish religious calendar, which meant changing the dates fixed for the Passover and other Jewish religious festivals. The conflict ended with no definite victory for either side, except that Aaron ben Me'ir failed to impose his will upon the Babylonian Jews. The result was a schism in which the Babylonians no longer accepted decisions made in Jerusalem. Passover and other festivals were therefore celebrated on different days by the two communities. Sa'adia's part in the affair established him as a fearless leading figure in Babylonian Jewry, and he was asked to write a history of the matter, which he did, together with a work in defence of the traditional rabbinic calendar, completed in 928.

In the spring of 928, the exilarch (head of Babylonian Jewry), David ben Zakkai, appointed Sa'adia the new *ga'on* (*lit.* sage) or head of the rabbinic academy of Sura, which had fallen in standing, and whose closure had even been considered. Sa'adia's appointment was controversial because the post usually went to a scholar from a well-connected family. Sa'adia was ultimately offered the position because he was the foremost scholar in Babylonian Jewry, and because of his high principles.

Sa'adia immediately applied his significant energy and skill to restoring the status of the academy. He began by raising the necessary funds from Jews, throughout Jewry and especially in Egypt. On the literary side, perceiving a need to systematize Talmudic law, he wrote a series of definitive works on the subject. He also compiled and arranged the Jewish prayers, to which he added some of his own original religious poetry. Although these works further established his position as the leading scholar, Sa'adia also seems to have alienated some of his friends and to have disturbed his relationship with the exilarch.

In 932, he refused to provide legal endorsement to an inheritance that had been left to the exilarch in a will, and an open quarrel ensued. David ben Zakkai excommunicated Sa'adia, who responded by excommunicating

the exilarch. After three years of conflict, in which both sides had their supporters among the rich and influential Jews of Baghdad, David ben Zakkai persuaded the Muslim ruler to remove Sa'adia from office.

Sa'adia went into seclusion, and in the next five years produced his major philosophical work, *Emunot ve-De'ot* ('Beliefs and Opinions'). The book is an attempt to harmonize the fruits of revelation and reason, a point of view influenced by the Muslim rationalist school, the *Mu'tazilah*. It includes chapters on the nature of the soul and on ethical living.

In 937, Sa'adia and David ben Zakkai were reconciled, and Sa'adia was reinstated as *ga'on*. In 940, the exilarch died, followed seven months later by his son. Sa'adia took the orphaned grandson of the exilarch into his own home, treating him as his own child. Sa'adia himself died in September 942.

Like many scholars of his time, Sa'adia wrote on a wide range of subjects including Jewish law, philosophy, grammar and polemics. He translated the *Pentateuch* and a number of other biblical books into Arabic, adding a commentary to many of them. He composed an Arabic–Hebrew dictionary and, like many others, he also wrote a commentary of the early mystical work, the *Sefer Yeẓirah* ('Book of Formation').

Raised in a Muslim world, Sa'adia wrote poetry in Hebrew and prose in Arabic. He is responsible for introducing Hebrew into Babylonian Judaism as the language of liturgical poetry. The purpose of his Arabic–Hebrew dictionary was help make Hebrew accessible as a language of poetry. In the introduction, he compares Hebrew to a woman whose beauty has been slighted by the children of Israel by their preference for the imperfect foreign languages of their exile.

Sadānanda Yogīndra Sarasvatī See **Vedāntasāra**.

Sa'dī, Shaykh Abū 'Abd Allāh Musharrif al-Dīn ibn Muṣliḥ (*c.*1213–91) Born in Shīrāz, Persia; a Persian poet and social reformer who also wrote on mysticism; said (with questionable authenticity) to have taken the name Sa'dī from his patron, Sa'd ibn Zangī, the *Atābak* of Fārs; lost his father while he was still a child; studied and subsequently taught at the celebrated Niẓāmīyah college of Islamic studies in Baghdad, where Shihāb al-Dīn Abū Ḥafṣ 'Umar Suhravardī and Ibn al-Jawzī were his teachers.

Because of the uncertainties following the Mongol invasion of Persia, Sa'dī travelled extensively in Anatolia, Iraq, Syria, Egypt, the Yemen and India, where he learned Hindustani. In Syria, he is believed to have been appointed *Imām* and *khaṭīb* (preacher) at a mosque. He returned to Shīrāz after 37 years of travelling, where he passed the remainder of his life.

Sa'dī's most famous works in Persian are the *Gulistān* ('The Rose Garden'), the *Būstān* (*lit.* the fragrant garden, commonly translated as 'The Orchard' to distinguish it from the *Gulistān*), *Ghazalīyāt* ('Lyrics') and

Qasā'id ('Odes'). The *Būstān,* written entirely in verse, aside from its rich human and mystical insight, is considered a masterpiece of classical Persian literature and is a set school book in modern Iran. The Gulistān is a mixture of prose and verse, much like the *Lama'āt* ('Divine Flashes') of 'Irāqī or the *Sawāniḥ* (*lit.* happenings; aphorisms on love) of Aḥmad Ghazālī, the younger brother of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī. It contains stories, aphorisms and advice, permeated by Sa'dī's kindly, wry and humorous perception of human existence.

Ṣadr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm Qawāmī Shīrāzī (1572–1640) Popularly known as Mullā Ṣadrā; born in Shīrāz, the son of a leading family; educated at Iṣfahān, the foremost cultural centre in Iran at that time; a student of Mīr Dāmād, the leading *Shī'ah* philosopher of the Safavid era; a Persian scholar, philosopher, mystic and original thinker, combining mysticism, philosophy and theology; a principal member of the *Ishrāqī* (Illuminationist) school of philosopher-mystics; generally considered by Iranians as their greatest philosopher; returned to Shīrāz to teach in his latter years, where he was persecuted by the Shi'ite orthodoxy as a heretic, but was protected by his family connections; died at Baṣrah (in Iraq) on a pilgrimage to Arabia.

The author of a number of books, of which *al-Asfār al-Arba'ah* ('The Four Journeys'), written after a 15-year retreat at the village of Kahak, near Qum, in Iran, is the most remembered. In it, he describes the spiritual path as four journeys. Firstly, man detaches himself from the world and the material self, reaching extinction in God. Secondly, he attains the station of sainthood, that of the divine Names and Attributes in which all he does is through the Divine. Thirdly, the last traces of the individual self become extinct in God, leaving only a transformed remainder of the self in this world. Fourthly, the Saint returns to this world for the benefit and guidance of others. Mullā Ṣadrā also believed that nature is both eternal and transient. It is the permanent link between the eternal and the created, the essential substance of all things, and the ground of all change.

Sahajobāī An eighteenth-century mystic and folk heroine who led a householder's life; known for her selfless devotion to her Master, Charaṇdās; born into a prominent family in the Mewāt region of Rajasthan; author of a book of poems, *Sahaj Prakāsh* ('Light on the Natural State'), which are simple and direct in expression, full with devotion and love for her Master.

Sā'ib Tabrīzī, Mīrzā Muḥammad 'Alī (*c.*1603–77) A Persian poet, born in Shīrāz; received his training in poetry from Ruknā Masīḥ of Kāshān; journeyed through Herāt and Kābul on his way to India, around 1624–25; gained access to the Mughul court through Ẓafar Khān, an administrator of Kābul during the rule of Shāh Jahān, who conferred on him the title of *Musta'idd*

Khān (able nobleman); remained in India for seven years before returning to Persia, where Shāh 'Abbās II appointed him chief poet in his court; died sometime between 1670 and 1678.

Sā'ib Tabrīzī was one of most prolific poets of his time, writing on mystical and spiritual themes. He was a leading exponent of the Indian style of Persian poetry, and highly acclaimed by oriental critics. His works include a long *maśnavī* (poem in rhymed couplets) – *Qandahār-Nāmah* ('Book of Qandahār'), *Mir'āt al-Jamāl* ('Mirror of Beauty'), *Mir'āt al-Khayāl* ('Mirror of Thought'), and *Maykhānah* ('The Tavern'). He also compiled an anthology, *Bayāḍ* ('Book') containing selections of his own verses as well as those of other poets, past and present.

Sajjādī, Sayyid Ja'far A modern Iranian scholar of Tehran; author of *Farhang-i Lughāt va-Iṣṭilāḥāt va-Ta'bīrāt 'Irfānī* ('Dictionary of Mystic Words, Terms and Interpretations'), published in 1991.

Sāma Veda (S) See **Vedas**.

Ṣamdī, Farīd Aḥmad A twentieth-century writer; author of *Iṣṭilāḥāt-i Ṣūfīyah* ('Dictionary of Sufi Terms') in Urdu, dictated and explained by his father, a learned Sufi, Ḥażrat Khwājah Shāh Muḥammad 'Abd al-Ṣamd Farīdī Fakhrī Chishtī. The work is not to be confused with the better-known *Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Ṣūfīyah* of 'Abd al-Razzāq Qāshānī.

Sanā'ī, Ḥakīm Abū al-Majd Majdūd ibn Ādam al-Ghaznawī (*d.c.* 1131) Born at Ghazna, in Afghanistan; the first of the great Persian poets, influencing the future development of Persian poetry; the first poet to use verse forms such as the *ghazal* (lyric poem), the *qasīdah* (ode) and the *maśnavī* (rhymed couplet) to express Sufi philosophy; author of some 30,000 verses; court poet of the Ghaznavid *sulṭāns* for some time, writing eulogies of his patrons; had achieved some renown as a poet before receiving instruction from Shaykh Yūsuf Hamadānī, and becoming a Sufi, following which he left Ghazna to live in Merv (in Turkmenistan); returned to Ghazna many years later, where he lived a quiet life, resisting the invitations of the *sulṭān*, Bahrām Shāh (1118–52), to join his court.

Sanā'ī's masterpiece, *Ḥadīqat al-Ḥaqīqah wa Sharī'at al-Ṭarīqah* ('Garden of Truth and the Law of the Path'), dedicated to Bahrām Shāh, was written after a pilgrimage to Mecca; his other works include *Ṭarīq al-Taḥqīq* ('Path to Realized Truth'), *Gharīb-Nāmah* ('Book of Strangers'), *Sayr al-'Ibād ilā al-Ma'ād* ('Journey of the Servant to the Hereafter'), *Kār-Nāmah* ('Book of Deeds'), *'Ishq-Nāmah* ('Book of Love'), *'Aql-Nāmah* ('Book of Reason'), and a *Dīvān* (collected poems). His works were studied by later Sufis, such as Rūmī and his disciples.

Sānkhyapravachana Bhāshya (S) *Lit.* commentary *(bhāshya)* on the doctrines *(pravachana)* of *Sānkhya;* written by the sixteenth-century Vijñānabhikshu as a commentary on the fourteenth-century (CE) *Sānkhya Sūtra.*

Sānkhya Sūtra (S) A fourteenth-century (CE) composition, comprising six books of aphorisms on the doctrines of the *Sānkhya* school of Indian philosophy, said to be based upon a now lost work, traditionally ascribed to the sage Kapila (*fl.c.*500 BCE). However, the *Sānkhya Sūtra* has elements of monistic theism, and thus differs philosophically from Kapila's atheistic *Sānkhya* system, as elucidated in the *Sānkhya Kārikā,* written by Īshvarakṛishṇa, probably during the third or fourth century CE, and described by Īshvarakṛishṇa as being based on the doctrine of Kapila as conveyed to Āsuri, and by Āsuri to Pañchasikha.

Sarmad, Muḥammad Sa'īd (*c.*1618–1660) A Jewish merchant, born in an Armenian family living in Kāshān, in Iran; studied Jewish theology at an early age and is said to have committed the *Torah* to memory; also studied the New Testament and Christianity; studied Islamic theology and science in Iran with Ṣadr al-Dīn Muḥammad (commonly known as Mullā Ṣadrā) and Mīr Abū al-Qāsim Findarskī, converting to Islam on their account; learnt Arabic, Persian, Urdu and Sanskrit; earned his living as a merchant, trading between Iran and India.

In 1634–35, Sarmad went to Lahore and thence to Hyderabad, where Sulṭān 'Abd Allāh Shāh's prime minister, Shaykh Muḥammad Khān, was greatly impressed with him. Around 1654, Sarmad settled in Delhi, by which time he is said to have taken to going about naked. Sarmad taught the path of the mystic Word, and is believed to have had a large following in Delhi. Here, he also met Muḥammad Dārā Shikoh (the eldest son of Shāh Jahān and the brother of Aurangzeb), who had a considerable interest in Sufism. Dārā Shikoh kept company with Sarmad, attending his discourses and visiting him whenever he could.

Like many other mystics, Sarmad was a free thinker, and his manner of expression was considered blasphemous by the Mughul religious authorities. By order of the Emperor Aurangzeb, he was arrested and sentenced to death after a summary trial by a court presided over by Sarmad's most significant enemy, Mullā Qavī, the chief *Qāżī.* It has been suggested that Sarmad's association with Dārā Shikoh was at least partially responsible for his execution. As the eldest son of Shāh Jahān, Dārā Shikoh was the heir apparent, but had been defeated in battle by Aurangzeb, who had challenged Dārā Shikoh for the throne. By Aurangzeb's orders, Dārā was executed in 1659. In consolidating his power, Aurangzeb wreaked bloody vengeance on all those he thought had assisted Dārā Shikoh. While Dārā Shikoh lived, his patronage would also have protected Sarmad from the vengeance of

Mullā Qavī. After the downfall of Dārā Shikoh, Sarmad was left with no political protector. Sarmad was beheaded in front of the *Jāmi' Masjid* in Old Delhi, where his tomb now stands.

There are many variant and conflicting anecdotes woven around Sarmad's death, especially his fearless replies to his prosecutors and his executioner. It is said that he was asked by Aurangzeb to explain why he did not recite the full profession of Muslim faith (*lā ilāha illā Allāh*, there is no god but God), instead of only its negative part, *lā ilāha* (there is no god). He replied that he was so deeply engrossed in its first part that he had no time consider the latter part, *illā Allāh* (but God). He is also supposed to have remarked that he welcomed his beheading because he had for some time been suffering from a headache.

When Sarmad was taken to the place of execution and the executioner began to cover Sarmad's eyes, Sarmad prevented him from doing so. Casting a glance at his executioner, Sarmad said with a smile, "Come in whatever garb you choose, I recognize you well." It is said that when he was beheaded, every drop of his blood called out "*Anā al-Ḥaqq* (I am God)", the saying more commonly associated with al-Ḥallāj. Another anecdote asserts that after his execution, his severed head recited the full profession of faith.

Sarmad was a prolific poet, composing verse in a variety of forms, including the *ghazal* (lyric ode), *rubā'ī* (quatrain), *qit'ah* (distich), and so on. His themes are the transitory nature of life, the supreme Reality, love of the divine Beloved, and so on. He also writes of his Master, though who his Master was is unknown.

Sarrāj, Abū Naṣr al- (*d.*988) An early Sufi from the city of Ṭūs in Khurāsān in northeastern Iran, a significant area in early Sufism; author of *Kitāb al-Luma' fī al-Taṣawwuf* ('Book of Light on Sufism'), the first systematic exposition of Sufism as a way of life, and a significant source of information on early Sufism.

Sarva Upanishad (S) *Lit.* the all-encompassing *(sarva) Upanishad;* also called the *Sarvasāra Upanishad;* belonging to the *Yajur Veda;* a short *Upanishad,* opening with a series of 23 questions concerning the fundamentals of *Vedānta* – what are bondage, liberation, ignorance, knowledge, waking, dreaming, dreamless sleep, the various coverings of the soul, and so on – which the *Upanishad* then proceeds to elucidate in a concise manner.

See also: **Upanishads**.

Sāwan Singh, Mahārāj (1858–1948) Also called the Great Master; an Indian Saint *(Sant);* born in the village of Jaṭānā, district Ludhiānā, in the Punjab; initiated by Bābā Jaimal Singh, who designated him as his successor in

1903. A professional engineer who had spent his working years as a civil engineer in the army, Mahārāj Sāwan Singh was responsible for the first phase of development at Dera Baba Jaimal Singh, the headquarters of Radha Soami Satsang Beas in the Punjab. He also toured extensively in India and what is now Pakistan. His books include *Gurmat Sidhānt* ('Philosophy of the Masters') – a comprehensive exposition of *Sant* teachings – as well as two volumes of letters written to Western disciples, and a volume of his discourses. The *Tales of the Mystic East* is a compilation of stories told by him. Under his guidance, an American disciple, Dr. Julian Johnson, wrote two books, *With a Great Master in India* and *The Path of the Masters*, which helped to introduce *Sant* teachings to the West. A short while before his death, he drew up a written will, nominating Sardār Bahādur Jagat Singh as his successor.

Second Apocalypse of James A gnostic text from the Nag Hammadi library, preserved in an extremely fragmentary state, entitled the *Apocalypse of James*, but designated the "Second" by modern scholars to distinguish it from another text of otherwise the same name; set as a report to Theuda (James' father) by Mareim (a priest and relative of Theuda, said to have been present at the stoning of James); contains two discourses of James, including a report of two discourses of Jesus to James, in the second of which, James is appointed as the "Illuminator" and gnostic redeemer; also describes the martyrdom of James, and his prayer for grace and release from this world of death.

Second Book of Jeu See **Bruce Codex**.

Second Treatise of the Great Seth A gnostic text from the Nag Hammadi codices; set as a revelational narrative in which Jesus Christ describes his commission by the heavenly "Assembly" to descend to earth "to reveal the glory to my kindred and fellow spirits"; the confusion of the ignorant *archons* (rulers) on his arrival; his confrontation with the equally ignorant chief *archon, Yaldabaoth;* his arrival in a body by casting "out the one who was in it first"; his persecution by those who had no idea who he was nor his purpose in coming here, including "those who think they are advancing the name of Christ"; his apparent crucifixion while another was crucified in his place (Simon of Cyrene); and his return to the eternal realm. The name Seth is mentioned only in the title. According to gnostic tradition, the gnostic wisdom of Adam passed to his son, Seth. Subsequently lost for long ages, it was again revealed to the followers of the Sethian school. In the case of this text, the source of this new revelation is presumably Christ.

Sefer 'Eẓ Ḥayyim (He) *Lit.* book *(sefer)* of the tree *('eẓ)* of life *(ḥayyim)*. A work by Ḥayyim Vital (1542–1640) in which he presented the teachings of his

Master, Rabbi Isaac Luria, including such subjects as the emanation and the creation of the world, the soul and its transmigrations, meditation and contemplation, and commentaries on the Bible, the *Talmud* and the *Zohar*. This material was subsequently published many times separately and in groupings with different arrangements of their contents. Some of these editions were called by the same name as the original work, some were called *Pri 'Eẓ Ḥayyim* ('Fruit of the Tree of Life').

See also: **Ḥayyim Vital**.

Sefer ha-Bahir (He) *Lit.* book *(sefer)* of radiance or illumination *(ha-bahir)*: first published anonymously around 1176 in Provence, France, the *Bahir* is one of the oldest and most important Kabbalistic texts. Most of its teachings are written as short parables and stories.

Sefer ha-Nefesh ha-Ḥakhamah (He) *Lit.* book *(sefer)* of the soul *(nefesh)* of wisdom *(Ḥakhamah)* or *Book of the Wise Soul;* a Kabbalistic work written in 1290 by Moses de León, probable author of the *Zohar;* written for his pupil Jacob, referring to many of the same sources as the *Zohar*.

See also: **Moses de León**.

Sefer Yeẓirah (He) *Lit.* book *(sefer)* of formation or creation *(yeẓirah);* a cryptic work, probably written between the second and fourth centuries CE; the oldest Kabbalistic text; uses numbers and symbols to describe the creation, and may have also been a manual for meditation techniques.

Seneca, Lucius Annaeus (*c.*4 BCE – 65 CE) Also called Seneca the Younger; a Roman philosopher, statesman and dramatist; born in Córdoba, Spain; the second son of a wealthy family, whose elder brother (Gallio) met St Paul in Achaea in 52 CE; educated in Rome in oratory and at a school that blended Stoicism and Pythagorean asceticism; suffered ill-health, recuperated in Egypt, and returned to Rome around 31; began a political career, but soon fell foul of the tyrannical emperor, Caligula, who was only persuaded to spare his life on the grounds that he was unlikely to live very long; charged by Emperor Claudius, in 41, with adultery with the emperor's niece, Julia Livilla, and banished to Corsica, passing his time in study and writing; recalled to Rome in 49; made praetor (a high ranking senior magistrate) in 50; married the wealthy Pompeia Paulina, and built up a powerful group of friends; became tutor and counsellor to the future emperor, Nero (37–68); drafted Nero's first speech after the assassination of Claudius, and – with his friends – was a powerful force in the Roman world during the early part of Nero's rule, introducing various fiscal, judicial and humane reforms;

retired in 62, but was denounced by his enemies in 65 as party to the conspiracy to assassinate Nero and make Gaius Calpurnius Piso emperor, and was ordered to commit suicide.

Seneca's writings are broadly divided into two categories. His philosophical and moralistic works such as *On Tranquillity of Mind* ('De tranquillitate animi'), *On Anger* ('De ira') and *On Mercy* ('De clementia') – addressed to Nero – present a broad-based Stoicism. His dramatic tragedies, designed more for reading than performance, highlight human vice and imperfection. His *Apocolocyntosis divi Claudii* – literally, the 'Pumpkinification of the Divine Claudius' fits neither category, and is a witty and scathing political sketch on the 'deification' of Claudius.

Sentences of Sextus A collection of around 450 aphorisms or sayings concerning spiritual perfection attributed to Sextus the Pythagorean; widely read by Christians of all persuasions; extant in two manuscripts in the original Greek, together with Coptic, Latin (translated by Rufinus), Syriac, Armenian and Georgian translations. The Coptic version, included in the Nag Hammadi library, is the earliest extant manuscript of the text, of which only 10 out of the original 39 pages have survived.

Septuagint Abbreviation *LXX;* from the Latin *septuaginta* (seventy); the earliest surviving Greek translation (from the original Hebrew) of the Old Testament, including the *Apocrypha;* made for the use of Greek-speaking Jews in Alexandria when Greek was the *lingua franca* of the area; linguistic analysis suggests that the *Pentateuch* was translated in the mid-third century BCE, and the remainder over a period of time during the second century BCE.

According to legend, seventy-two Jewish translators, six from each of the twelve tribes of Israel, were confined to individual cells. Each translated the whole, and when their work was compared, they were all identical. However, there are considerable stylistic differences between the translations of the *Pentateuch* and the rest of the Bible. The tradition that the work was begun at the instigation of Ptolemy II (285–246 BCE), who asked Eleazar, the chief priest at Jerusalem, to send a team of translators to Alexandria, has its origins in the *Letter of Aristeas.* This letter, purporting to have been written by Aristeas, an official in Ptolemy's court, is full of inaccuracies and is generally regarded as spurious. It was probably written in the mid-second century (BCE) in support of Judaism.

The *Septuagint* was the Greek text used by Christians to find 'prophecies' concerning Christ. The Jews regarded this as inappropriate, and stopped using it, especially because of its many divergencies from the original Hebrew. The further history of the *Septuagint* was subsequently confined to Christianity, where it remains the standard translation used by the Greek Orthodox Church.

Because of copyists' errors, the text became increasingly corrupt, and many widely differing versions were in circulation. During the early third century, Origen (*c.*185–254), a Christian scholar from Alexandria, tried to correct these, while other scholars consulted the Hebrew to check the accuracy of the translation. Nevertheless, the *Septuagint* was used as the main source for the translations into Old Latin, Coptic, Ethiopic, Armenian, Georgian, Slavonic and part of the Arabic Bibles. Jerome (*c.*347–420) began his Latin translation (the *Vulgate*) from the *Septuagint*, but was dissatisfied, and used the original Hebrew when he returned to the work.

Although there are many early papyrus fragments of the *Septuagint*, the earliest complete manuscripts are the fourth-century (CE) *Codex Vaticanus* and the *Codex Sinaiticus*, and the fifth-century *Codex Alexandrinus*.

Seth Shiv Dayāl Singh, Swāmī (1818–78) A nineteenth century Indian Saint *(Sant);* born in Agra; raised on the teachings of the *Ādi Granth;* a disciple of Tulsī Sāhib of Hāthras, near Agra; said to have spent 17 years in meditation before starting to teach the path of the *Shabd* (Word) in 1861; directed his disciple, Bābā Jaimal Singh, a few months before his death, to return to the Punjab and start *satsang* (discourses) and initiation; the author of *Sār Bachan Poetry* and *Sār Bachan Prose* (*Sār Bachan* meaning 'true sayings').

Sextus Empiricus A third-century (BCE) Greek philosopher and medical doctor; foremost exponent of Pyrrho's (*c.*365–275) Scepticism, which taught that real knowledge of anything is impossible, thus contradicting the arguments of those philosophers who based their conclusions on logic; author of *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* and *Against the Logicians.*

Sha'arei Kedushah (He) *Lit.* gates *(sha'arei)* of holiness *(kedushah);* a moralizing tract by Ḥayyim Vital, first published in Constantinople in 1734.

See also: **Ḥayyim Vital**.

Shabistarī, Shaykh Sa'd al-Dīn Maḥmūd ibn 'Abd al-Karīm ibn Yaḥyā (*c.*1250–1320) A Sufi mystic, born in Shabistar, near Tabrīz in Persia. Little is known of his life, but it seems that much of it was spent in Tabrīz, though he also travelled widely, meeting many mystics and scholars. After the Mongol invasion and the final fall of Persia in 1258, Tabrīz became the Mongol capital. Impassioned doctrinal disputes took place between Muslims and Christians in the attempt to win the patronage of the heathen rulers, and Shabistarī demonstrates a knowledge of Christian beliefs. Perhaps as a response to the confusion surrounding him, he sought refuge in a spiritual life.

His works include two Sufi treatises, *Ḥaqq al-Yaqīn* ('Certain Truth') and *Risālah-i Shāhid* ('Discourse of the Witness'), the latter no longer extant,

and his classic Sufi text, *Gulshan-i Rāz* ('Rose Garden of Mystery'), written in 1311 or perhaps 1317 in the form of questions and answers concerning Sufi doctrine. First introduced to Europe around 1700, it was translated into German in 1821. The book became popular for some time, and was read by Christians in search of a non-ritualistic and mystical approach to union with the Divine. Shabistarī writes, "In God there is no duality. In that presence 'I' and 'we' and 'you' do not exist. 'I' and 'you' and 'we' and 'He' become one. Since in the Unity, there is no distinction, the quest and the way and the seeker become one" (in "Mysticism", *EB*).

Shāfi'ī Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Idrīs, Imām al- (767–820) An Islamic legalist and a primary figure in the founding of Islamic religious law (the *Sunnah*); born in Arabia; lost his father while still very young, and raised in poverty by his mother, in Mecca; belonged to the *Quraysh* tribe, of which Muḥammad was a member, and who inhabited Mecca at the time of Muḥammad; spent much time with the Bedouin, from whom he became familiar with Arabic poetry; travelled to Madīnah when about 20, to study with Mālik ibn Anas; on the death of Mālik in 795, went to the Yemen, where he became involved in subversive activities, and was briefly imprisoned in Syria in 803; studied in Baghdad for some time with al-Shaybānī of the *Ḥanafī* school of Islamic religious law; went to al-Fusṭāṭ, the old city of Cairo, in Egypt; returned to Baghdad in 810, where he taught Islamic law; returned to al-Fusṭāṭ around 815-16, where he stayed for the remainder of his life, and where he wrote his seminal and influential book, *Risālah* ('Discourses'). For a long time after his death, his tomb was a place of pilgrimage.

Through his travels, al-Shāfi'ī gained a broad knowledge of Islamic religious law, creating an organized synthesis of the various schools of thought. This was formed by his students into the *Shāfi'īyah* school, which was universally adopted by other schools. His primary concerns were the sources of religious law, and their application to contemporary events. He promoted the *Ḥadīth* (traditional sayings and stories of Muḥammad) and *Sunnah* (Islamic law) as the basis for interpretation of the *Qur'ān*.

Shāhburkān A book, now lost, written by the third-century Iranian mystic, Mānī (*c*.216–276), and dedicated to King Shāpūr, whose patronage and support Mānī enjoyed; mentioned by the great eleventh-century Arabic scholar, al-Bīrūnī.

Shāh Ni'mat Allāh Valī See **Valī, Shāh Ni'mat Allāh Nūr al-Dīn ibn Allāh**.

Shakespeare, William (1564–1616) An English playwright and poet; born and died at Stratford-upon-Avon, having spent most of his working life in London. Little is known of Shakespeare's life apart from a few comments

from contemporary sources, and some bare details gleaned from official documents – dates of birth, marriage, death, wills, conveyances, and so on. It seems his father, John Shakespeare, was a local businessman, a burgess of the borough who became an alderman in 1565 and bailiff (equivalent to mayor) in 1568. His mother was Mary Arden, of Wilmcote, Warwickshire, from an ancient family, and an heiress of some land. He probably attended the local grammar school, where he would have studied Latin and some of the classical historians, dramatists and poets. There is no evidence that he had any higher education.

According to the episcopal register at Worcester, Shakespeare was married in November 1582 to Anne Hathaway of Stratford at the age of 18, and his first daughter is recorded as being baptized six months later in May 1583. In 1585, he became the father of twins, a girl and a boy, the latter dying at the age of 11. The next eight years or so are a mystery, until his name first appears in London theatre records. A number of later legends have him poaching deer from a local magnate, earning his living as a schoolteacher, and obtaining entry to the thespian world by minding the horses of theatregoers.

Shakespeare's 33 plays, exhibiting a universally acknowledged dramatic skill, a comprehensive and often witty command of the English language, and an acute perception of human nature, were written between 1590 and 1612. Not much is known of his personal beliefs, but it has been said that his character Prospero, the shipwrecked and marooned duke of Milan in *The Tempest,* who becomes a master of the supernatural, embodies Shakespeare's own philosophy in such famous observations as, "We are such stuff as dreams are made on, and our little life is rounded with a sleep" (4:1). His sonnets, a source of much scholarly speculation, were published in 1609.

Shams-i Tabrīz (1206–48) Full name, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn 'Alī ibn Malik dād Tabrīzī; a Persian Sufi, of whom very little is known; the subject of a number of legendary stories; presumed to have been born and/or educated in Tabrīz, capital of Azerbaijan, then in northwest Iran; commonly described as a wandering dervish, who earned himself the nickname of *Prandah* (Flier); apparently unattached to any particular Sufi order, though said to have studied under Bābā Kamāl Jundī, Abū Bakr Sillah-bāf and Rukn al-Dīn Sanjāsī; believed to have been in Syria for some time, where it is possible that he met Ibn 'Arabī; travelled to Konya (now in Turkey) in 1244, where Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī became his disciple; returned to Tabrīz, due to the hostility and jealousy of Rūmī's family and college students, but recalled by Rūmī who went to find him; returned to Damascus, where he remained for two years.

Unable to bear the separation, and hearing that Shams al-Dīn was in Damascus, Rūmī dispatched his eldest son, Sulṭān Walad, to beg Shams to

return. Sulṭān Walad returned with Shams, who now stayed in Rūmī's house. The hostility continued, however, and in 1247, Shams disappeared under uncertain circumstances, which have been the subject of a number of apocryphal explanations by various Sufis, though all presume that he was murdered.

A number of these legends are related by Jāmī in *Nafaḥāt al-Uns* ('Fragment Breaths of the Intimate'). According to one version of events, says Jāmī, Shams and Rūmī were sitting together one evening, when someone called to Shams to come outside immediately. Shams said, "I am called to my death." He went outside, and was set upon by seven conspirators armed with daggers. Shams uttered such a terrible cry that his murderers were dumbfounded. When they recovered their wits, Shams had completely disappeared. All they could find was a few drops of blood. Each of the villains met their death soon after, including Rūmī's younger son, Allāh al-Dīn Muḥammad, who died of a strange and sudden disease. Jāmī goes on to say that according to other legends, the conspirators threw the body of Shams into a well. Subsequently, Rūmī's elder son, Sulṭān Walad, had a dream in which Shams appeared and told him he was asleep in the well. At midnight, Sulṭān Walad and some close friends extracted the body and buried it beside the tomb of the founder of the college where Rūmī taught.

Shams was the inspiration behind Rūmī's, *Dīvān-i Shams-i Tabrīz,* possibly written after Shams al-Dīn's return to Damascus and/or after his final disappearance. No writings attributed to Shams, if there were any, have been preserved.

See also: **Rūmī**.

Shankara (*c.*788–820 CE) Also called Shankarāchārya; the most influential classical Indian philosophers; a well-known teacher of Vedantic philosophy, credited with founding the *Advaita* (non-dualistic) school of *Vedānta,* which teaches that God is the only Reality and that everything else is false, illusory and impermanent; the subject of at least 11 ancient biographies, all written several centuries after his life, and sometimes mutually conflicting; traditionally assigned the dates 788–820 CE, but regarded by many twentieth-century scholars as having lived from approximately 700 to 750, though some have assigned him to the first century BCE.

According to one tradition, he was born in Kālaḍi, Kerala, to a devout *brāhmaṇ* family, losing his father while still young. He became a *sannyāsin* (renunciate), against his mother's wishes, and a disciple of Govinda. Little is known of Govinda except that he was a disciple of Gauḍapāda, the author of a verse commentary *(kārikā)* on the *Māṇḍūkya Upanishad.*

Shankara's biographers agree that he went to the religious, spiritual and intellectual centre of Vārāṇasī, in Uttar Pradesh. During his time there, he is said to have held a lively debate with Maṇḍana Mishra, a proponent of

Mīmāṃsā philosophy, which teaches in the strict performance of Vedic rituals. The debate reflects part of the religious environment in which Shankara taught. Subsequently, he undertook extensive teaching tours throughout village India, where he gradually earned the respect of the *brāhmaṇs*. It is said that he would not teach in the cities, where Buddhism and Jainism were still strong faiths, and where people sought comfort and pleasure. He sought to re-establish *Vedānta*, reinterpreting it in terms distinct from the Buddhist philosophy which had claimed it. He also established four *āshrams*, which became significant in the later development of his teaching into India's leading philosophy. He is said to have died at Kedārnāth in the Himalayas.

A prolific writer, more than 300 works are attributed to him, though most are of dubious authenticity. He wrote extensive commentaries on the *Upanishads*, the *Bhagavad Gītā*, and the *Brahma Sūtras* (regarded as his masterpiece, now a standard work on *Vedānta*), as well as a great many independent treatises on *Vedānta*, including *Bhaja Govindam* ('Worship God'), *Brahmajñānāvalīmālā* ('Garland of Divine Knowledge'), *Tattvabodha* ('Knowledge of Reality'), *Ātmabodha* ('Self-Knowledge') and *Vivekachūḍāmaṇi* ('Crown Jewel of Wisdom'). His style is lucid, analytical and perceptive.

See also: **Gauḍapāda**.

Shatapatha Brāhmaṇa (S) *Lit.* the *Brāhmaṇa* of one hundred *(shata)* paths *(patha);* a *Brāhmaṇa* associated with the *Yajur Veda,* consisting of one hundred lessons; regarded as highly as the *Ṛig Veda.*

See also: **Brāhmaṇas**.

Shaykh Taqī A Muslim religious scholar and seeker of whom practically nothing is known; remembered for the three *ghazals* (lyric poems) of Tulsī Sāhib, written specifically for him, in which the mystic truth behind certain Muslim traditions is explained. According to tradition, Shaykh Taqī had set up camp close to Tulsī Sāhib's cottage during his return from a pilgrimage to Mecca.

Shepherd of Hermas A late-first- or second-century Christian text relating five visions experienced by the author Hermas, and named after the angel of repentance who appears in the fifth vision in the garb of a shepherd; also contains 12 mandates (moral commandments) and 10 parables; concerned with sin, repentance and morals rather than theology; regarded as scripture by Irenaeus (*c.*120–202), Clement of Alexandria (*c.*150–215), Origen (*c.*185–254) and Tertullian (*fl.*190–220), but denied by the Muratorian Canon (*c.*180, the oldest extant list of New Testament writings) to have been

inspired; popular in the Eastern Church, but said by Jerome to have been little known in the Western Church; present in the fourth-century Greek biblical manuscript, the *Codex Sinaiticus;* also extant in Latin and Ethiopic, and as fragments in Coptic and Persian. Dated from the late first or early second century, the author describes himself as a Christian slave, who was given his freedom, became a wealthy merchant, lost his property, and did penance for past sins.

Shiva Saṃhitā (S) One of the principal manuals of *yoga,* probably written in the late-seventeenth or early-eighteenth century CE; discusses *karma, jñāna* (mystic knowledge), the spirit, *māyā* (illusion), *avidyā* (spiritual ignorance), the *jīva* (incarnate soul), the microcosm of the body, the *nāḍīs, prāṇas,* the *guru, prāṇāyāma, siddhis* (powers), destruction of *karma* through listening to the *Praṇava Om, āsanas* (postures), *mudrās* (poses), *kuṇḍalinī, dhāraṇā* (concentration), the six *chakras, rāja yoga,* and so on.

Shne'ur Zalman of Lyady (1745–1813) Born, according to family tradition, in Liozna in Belorussia; following his marriage in 1760, devoted himself to study of the *Torah;* realizing that he knew "a little about learning, but nothing about prayer" (in "Shne'ur Zalman", *EJCD*), went to the leader of the Hasidic movement, Dov Baer, the *maggid* (*lit.* preacher) of Mezhericz and successor of the Ba'al Shem Tov, of whom he became a close disciple.

Despite his young age, he was deputed by Dov Baer in 1770 to write a new and up- to-date version of Joseph Karo's legal code, *Shulḥan 'Arukh* ('The Laid Table'). Although he worked on this project for many years, only small parts of it were ever published in his lifetime. About two thirds were destroyed by fire, and the remaining third was published after his death. Though not on Hasidism, the work illustrates Shne'ur Zalman's lucid Hebrew style, and his ability to explain complex matters in a simple manner. The work became an authority on Jewish legal matters among the Hasidim of Lubavitch.

In 1788, he was appointed Hasidic leader of Reisen by Menaḥem Mendel of Vitebsk, then leader of the Hasidic movement, a post which was more or less an endorsement of the actuality, since Rabbi Shne'ur Zalman already had many followers. Shne'ur Zalman had by this time created a distinct form of Hasidism, which became known as *ḤaBaD.* In 1797, he published his *Likkutei Amarim* ('Collected Sayings'), anonymously. This lucid exposition, which became known as the *Tanya* ('It has been taught'), rapidly found acceptance as the "written law of *ḤaBaD*" Hasidism. *ḤaBaD* is an acrostic of the Kabbalistic terms *Ḥokhmah* (Wisdom), *Binah* (Understanding) and *Da'at (Knowledge),* three of the highest *sefirot* (divine emanations), which, according to *ḤaBaD,* represent "germinal, developmental and conclusive" knowledge, embodying Shne'ur Zalman's systematic approach.

The growth in popularity of Hasidism gave rise to a counter-movement among Jewish traditionalists, the *Mitnaggedim* (*lit.* opponents), who attempted to check its growth by informing on its members to the Russian authorities. Avigdor ben Joseph Ḥayyim, the Rabbi of Pinsk, accused Shne'ur Zalman of forming a new religious sect (illegal in Russia at the time) and of 'treason' (sending money to Palestine, interpreted as "helping the Turkish *sulṭān*"). In 1798, Shne'ur Zalman was arrested and sent for trial to St Petersburg, but was acquitted of all charges. In 1801, he was again arrested, but released upon the accession of the tsar, Alexander I. Shne'ur Zalman subsequently made his home in Lyady.

As Hasidism evolved, its exposition became more intellectual, and a number of conflicts and rivalries developed between the different Hasidic schools, all of which caused Shne'ur Zalman considerable pain, although his influence remained undiminished. When Napoleon invaded Russia in 1812, Shne'ur Zalman encouraged support of the Russian cause, believing that this would benefit Judaism more than a victory by the revolutionary French. Fleeing with the retreating Russian army, he died at Piena (Kursk district) in 1813, and was buried in Hadich (Poltava district).

Shne'ur Zalman was one of the most significant Jewish personalities of his day. His scholarship covered the *Talmud* and the *Kabbalah*, as well as science and mathematics. His masterly ability to organize material into a simple understandable system was enhanced by a lucid manner of exposition. Possessed of personal charisma, his teachings blended mysticism with common sense. He also composed a number of fine Hasidic melodies. After his death, *ḤaBaD* Hasidism was led by his eldest son, Dov Baer (1773–1827).

Shne'ur Zalman taught that an entirely 'intuitive' and emotional approach to the life of prayer could easily give rise to self-deception. He therefore advocated regular study as a means of strengthening faith, together with the necessity of continuous spiritual exercises to maintain lasting spiritual progress. He also developed the idea of the *beinoni* (the average man). The *Ẓaddik,* or spiritual Master, he said, was an exceptional person, chosen from birth for the position. The *beinoni* or average person cannot be expected to reach the same heights of identification with the Divine. He can only strive for individual perfection by resisting evil and living his daily life to a high moral and spiritual standard. To accomplish this, he taught, he must awaken the love which dwells from birth in every Jewish heart. At the same time, the head must rule the emotions. The way to achieve this is through meditation on the greatness of the Creator, and through love and reverence for Him. This awakens the soul's primal and essential feelings of love for the Divine.

Although the *Tanya* is Shne'ur Zalman's most well-known work, he is also the author of a number of other books, including *Likkutei Torah* ('Gleanings from the *Torah*'), *Torah Or* ('*Torah* of Light') and *Ma'amarei Admor ha-Zaken* ('Sayings of the Ancient *Admor*') – *Admor* being an

abbreviation of the Hebrew title used for Hasidic rabbis, *Adonenu, Morenu ve-Rabenu* (our lord, teacher and Master).

Shrī Yukteshwar (1855–1936) Full name, Jñānāvatār Swāmī Shrī Yukteshwar Giri; a disciple of Lahiri Mahāsaya; best known as the *Guru* of Paramhansa Yogananda; author of *Kaivalya Darshana. Kaivalya Darshana* means light *(darshana)* on *kaivalya* (liberation, beatitude, absolute unity, detachment). The book points out parallels between the biblical *Book of Revelation* and the Indian *Sānkhya* philosophy.

Shvetāshvatara Upanishad (S) Belonging to the *Yajur Veda;* named after the *ṛishi* who is said in the last chapter (6:21) to have taught it to his disciples; one of the more ancient *Upanishads,* regarded as a principal one; lays impartial emphasis on knowledge, devotion and other aspects of spiritual life, demonstrating features common to all schools of Indian spiritual philosophy.

See also: **Upanishads.**

Sibylline Oracles A varied collection of prophecies in which Jewish or Christian doctrines are confirmed by a sibyl (legendary Greek oracle or prophetess); written between the second century BCE and the seventh century CE; actually composed by Jewish and Christian writers; not to be confused with the *Sibylline Books,* a much earlier collection of such prophecies. By first 'predicting' recent events, the author gained the reader's confidence, going on to predict future happenings and to set forth Jewish and Christian doctrines; taken as genuine by a number of Jewish and Christian writers, including the Jewish historian, Josephus, and the second-century Christian theologians, Clement of Alexandria and Theophilus of Antioch, who regarded the sibyl to be as inspired as the biblical prophets; dated in modern times, often with considerable uncertainty, by comparing actual events with the predictions, and noting the onset of errors. No earlier than the sixth century CE, 12 of the oracles were collected into one document, containing 14 books, of which books 9 and 10 are lost.

Sikh Gurus A line of *Gurus,* beginning with Guru Nānak, who lived in the Punjab region of North India, spanning a period of nearly two and a half centuries, from 1469 to 1708. The writings of the first five *Gurus* were collected together in the *Ādi Granth* by the fifth *Guru,* Guru Arjun, to which those of the ninth *Guru* were added by the tenth *Guru.* The ten *Gurus* were:

Guru Nānak (1469–1539) Born in Talwaṇḍī, now known as Nankānā Sāhib, district Shaykhupurā, near Lahore, now in Pakistan; spent a large part of his life travelling to spread the doctrine of the mystic Name *(Nām)* or

Word *(Shabd),* at a time when there was no mechanized form of transport; appointed his disciple, Bhāī Lehnā, as his successor, who he renamed as Guru Angad.

Guru Angad (1504–52) Born in Matte-dī-Sarāe, district Ferozpur, in the Punjab; a disciple of Guru Nānak, who appointed him as his successor, a position he held for 13 years.

Guru Amardās (1479–1574) Born in the village of Bāsarke in Amritsar district; part farmer and part trader by profession; a devout Vaishnavite before meeting his Master, Guru Angad, at the age of 61; appointed *Guru* at the age of 73, a position he held for 22 years; collected together the works of his two predecessors, to which he added his own poetic works of 907 *shabds,* a collection which became the basis of Guru Arjun's later compilation, the *Ādi Granth.*

Guru Rāmdās (1534–81) Born into humble circumstances at Lahore; became the son-in-law of Guru Amardās, who appointed him as his successor.

Guru Arjun (1563–1606) The youngest son of the fourth *Guru;* responsible for compiling the book now known as the *Ādi Granth,* including his own *shabds,* numbering over 2,200; died a martyr's death at Lahore in 1606.

Guru Hargobind (1595–1644) The son of Guru Arjun; became the *Guru* when he was only 11 years old; uncertain whether he was appointed by his father or by a group of Guru Arjun's disciples; organised his followers into a military brotherhood and built the Akāl Takht which stands opposite the Golden Temple in Amritsar; said to have been fond of hunting; succeeded by his grandson, Har Rāi.

Guru Har Rāi (1630–61) The grandson of Guru Hargobind; believed to have been extremely soft-hearted, avoiding clashes with the Mughul rulers, despite keeping a fighting force of 2,200 to defend the Sikh community; said, like his father, to have been fond of hunting, but preferring to catch his prey alive, keeping them in a large zoo or aviary; succeeded by his five-year-old son, Har Krishaṇ.

Guru Har Krishaṇ (1656–64) The son of Guru Har Rāi; barely five years old when appointed by his father to succeed him as *Guru;* died of smallpox at the age of eight; succeeded by his grand-uncle, the son of Hargobind, Tegh Bahādur.

Guru Tegh Bahādur (1621–75) Appointed *Guru* by a group of disciples; the son of Guru Hargobind; 59 *shabds* and 57 of his *shaloks* were included in the *Ādi Granth* by his son, Gobind Singh; beheaded at Chāndnī Chowk, Delhi in November 1675 by order of Emperor Aurangzeb, for refusing to embrace Islam; appointed his only son, Gobind Singh, to succeed him as *Guru.*

Gobind Singh (1666–1708) Son of Guru Tegh Bahādur; born in Paṭnā, Bihar, becoming *Guru* at the age of nine, on the martyrdom of his father; founder of the *Khālsā* (pure of faith); organized his followers into a military

force; author of a number of works, although perhaps not all those ascribed to him.

See also: **Sikhism** (1.11).

Simnānī, Rukn al-Dīn Abū al-Makārim Aḥmad ibn Sharaf al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Biyābānakī 'Alā' al-Dawlah al- (1261–1336) Born in Dhū al-Ḥijjah in Simnān, in the region of Khurāsān (in northeastern Iran), to a rich and prominent family, whose father became governor of Iraq for a short while; left Simnān at the age of 15, and entered government service; said to have had a vision of the other world in 1284, near Qazwīn, during a military campaign; remained in service until 1286, before returning on leave to Simnān; adopted *Sunnī* orthodoxy and Sufism, performing spiritual exercises in accordance with the instructions contained in Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī's *Qūt al-Qulūb* ('Sustenance of the Heart'), until he met Sharaf al-Dīn Sa'd Allāh, from whom he learnt a particular form of recollection *(ẕikr)*, the practice of which resulted in internal manifestations of light during his first night of practice.

Sa'd Allāh had been sent to al-Simnānī by al-Kasirqī al-Isfarā'inī. Wishing to become a disciple of al-Kasirqī, who lived in Baghdad, al-Simnānī set out for the capital. After some considerable adventures, including his arrest and detention on matters concerning his previous government service and affiliations, he finally reached Baghdad in 1289. In 1290, following orders from al-Kasirqī, he went on a pilgrimage to Mecca and Madīnah, returning to Baghdad in 1290. From there, he travelled on to Simnān, where he began the instruction of Sufis in the *Khānaqāh-i Sakkākī* (a Sufi 'monastery'), where he died in 1336.

Al-Simnānī was a *Sunnī* and condemned several Shi'ite tendencies. The Shi'ites were in power, and although he advocated war against unbelievers, he rejected the idea of armed revolt against the Shi'ites, advising patience under oppression. In his Sufi affiliation, he was a Kubrāwī, al-Kasirqī being a direct spiritual descendant of al-Kubrá (*c.*1145–1220). But he also venerated other *Shaykhs,* particularly Abū Ḥafṣ 'Umar al-Suhravardī (1135–1234). He respected Rūmī, but did not completely agree with him. He had a high regard for al-Ghazālī, but accused him of emphasizing theory over experience.

His *bête noire* was Ibn 'Arabī (1165–1240), whose 'pantheistic' system, he vehemently opposed, both in his writings and in his correspondence with 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī (*d.*1329), a disciple of al-Qūnawī, the successor of Ibn 'Arabī. His main point of contention was that he saw being *(wujūd)* as an eternal Attribute *(ṣifah)* of God, distinct from His Essence *(Dhāt),* while Ibn 'Arabī identified *Wujūd* with God. From this viewpoint flowed a number of other disagreements with Ibn 'Arabī.

Al-Simnānī appears to have had a considerable affinity and awareness of the spiritual vibrations in his environment, feeling the living presence of *Khaḍir* (the Lord). He also seems to have attempted to contact the departed spirits of the great, in an almost mediumistic manner.

Like most Kubrāwīs, he accepted Junayd's eightfold conditions of the Sufi path. He believed that although Sufis should give away all their possessions, they should still earn their own living, and not be beggars. Al-Simnānī advocated intensive cultivation of the soil as a means of both work and service to humanity. He also practised listening to music *(samā')* as means to ecstasy, and repeated the Islamic profession of faith, *lā ilāha illā Allāh* (there is no god but God), with the attention directed to different parts of the body for each word.

Al-Simnānī aspired to large number of disciples, hoping to find one among them who was chosen to be his successor. His most important disciple seems to have been 'Alī-i Hamadānī. Al-Simnānī was a prolific writer in both Arabic and Persian, but his works exist only in manuscript form (some perhaps dating to the time of the author himself), and have never been published. There is also a collection of his sayings made by his disciple Iqbāl ibn Sābiq-i Sīstānī.

Simplicius (*fl.c.*530 CE) A Greek philosopher who studied in Athens and Alexandria, passing much of his life in Athens except for a brief period after the Christian emperor, Justinian, closed Plato's old Athenian Academy in 529; author of learned commentaries on Aristotle's *Physics, On the Heavens* ('De caelo'), *On the Soul* ('De anima') and *Categories* ('Categoriae'), significant for the fragments they contain from the writings of pre-Socratic philosophers.

Skanda Purāṇa (S) One of the 18 principal *Purāṇas,* exalting the deity *Shiva.*

See also: **Purāṇas.**

Song of Songs The first of the 'five scrolls' included in the Hagiographic (Writings) in the Hebrew Bible, comprising a series of love poems expressing the joy of love and the yearning of the lover for the beloved, and *vice versa;* characterized by colourful and ample imagery, including descriptions of the physical beauty of the lovers. Since the first century CE, there has been discussion about why this book should have been included in the Bible, but the greatest rabbis of antiquity, including Rabbi Akiva and many others, have attested to its spiritual import. It has been interpreted allegorically as an expression of God's love for Israel, and later by Christians as the relationship of Christ and the Church. Mystics of the Judaeo-Christian world have also understood it more generally as the story of the soul's relationship with

the divine Beloved. The origins of the *Song of Songs* is uncertain. Some of the songs are possibly pre-exilic, the collection being finally edited in the fifth or fourth century BCE. The sequence of poems, however, form one sequence, and may thus have been the work of just one author.

Sophia of Jesus Christ A Christian overwriting of *Eugnostos the Blessed,* both being gnostic texts from the Nag Hammadi library; possibly dates from the first century; set as a discourse given by Jesus to his disciples after his resurrection, "not in his previous form, but in the invisible spirit"; an excellent example of the Christianizing of a previously more universal text; describes the hierarchy of the creation, man's fall to the material world, and the sending of a Saviour, who is named as Jesus in the *Sophia of Jesus Christ,* but left unnamed in *Eugnostos the Blessed.*

Sophoclēs (*c.*496–406 BCE) One of the three great classical tragedians of ancient Athens, along with Aeschylus and Euripidēs; most remembered for *Oedipus the King;* born at Colonus, a village near Athens; son of Sophillus, a wealthy armourer; chosen at 16 for his handsome and athletic appearance, and his musical talent, to lead a song of praise to the gods after the decisive defeat of the Persian navy at the Battle of Salamis; participated fully in community life, with grace and charm, and the exercise of considerable artistic talents, occupying various high official and military positions; one of 10 appointees, in 413 (aged about 83), charged with the restoration of Athenian finances after their crushing defeat at the Sicilian city of Syracuse; leader of a chorus in public mourning for the death of Euripidēs, in 406, shortly before his own death, and two years before the final surrender of Athens to Sparta in 404.

A prolific playwright, credited with 123 dramas, Sophoclēs first won the Dionysian dramatic festival in 468, defeating Aeschylus. Over the years, he probably won as many as twenty-four victories, compared with Aeschylus' thirteen and Euripidēs' four.

Suhravardī, Abū al-Najīb 'Abd al-Qāhir ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Bakrī Żiya' al-Dīn al- (1097–1168) A Sufi and scholar, who earned his living as a water carrier; born in Suhravard, moving to Baghdad in 1113, where he studied *ḥadīth* and *Shāfi'ī* law; went to Iṣfahān in 1126 to join the celebrated Sufi, Aḥmad al-Ghazālī, the younger brother of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī; returned to Baghdad around 1130, where he became a disciple of Ḥammād al-Dabbās; best known for his Arabic work, *Ādāb al-Murīdīn* ('The Way of Disciples'), a classic of mystical instruction. The *Suhravardīyah* order of Sufis was founded in his name by his nephew, Shihāb al-Dīn Abū Ḥafṣ 'Umar Suhravardī.

Suhravardī al-Maqtūl, Shihāb al-Dīn Yaḥyā (1154–91) Also called *Shaykh al-Ishrāq* (Master of Illumination); born in northwestern Persia, later travelling to Aleppo near Damascus; taught *gnosis* or knowledge based upon personal inner experience, rather than intellectual reasoning; believed to have been highly disciplined and a brilliant debater, perhaps provoking envy among the philosophers, scholars and theologians with whom he came into contact; imprisoned and executed on a charge of heresy at the age of 36; often called *al-Maqtūl* (he who was killed) to avoid confusion with the other two Suhravardīs with whom the *Suhravardīyah* order of Sufis originated. A prolific author, despite his short life, his works include *Lughat-i Mūrān* ('Language of the Ants'), *Avāz-i Par-i Jibrā'īl* ('The Sound of Gabriel's Wing'), *'Aql-i Surkh* ('Red Wisdom'), *Naghmāt al-Samavīyah* ('Heavenly Melodies') and *Ṣafīr-i Sīmurgh* ('Cry of the Phoenix'), which describes the divine Music reverberating within all human beings. His philosophy was later followed mainly by the *Shī'ah* philosophers and was an important element in Persian thought of the later Middle Ages. Suhravardī's doctrines culminate in the *Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq* ('Philosophy of Illumination'). His shorter work, *Hayākil al-Nūr* ('Temples of Light') has been read in Muslim India for centuries.

Suhravardī, Shihāb al-Dīn Abū Ḥafṣ 'Umar (1145–1234) The nephew of 'Abd al-Qāhir Abū Najīb Suhravardī; politician, statesman and Sufi; founded the *Suhravardīyah* order of Sufis in his uncle's name; author of *'Awārif al-Ma'ārif* ('Gifts of Divine Knowledge'), which outlines all the major tenets of Sufism, drawing widely on the writings of previous Sufis, and which helped to spread the *Suhravardīyah* order as far as India; one of the teachers of Shaykh Sa'dī at the esteemed Niẓāmīyah college of Islamic studies in Baghdad, where he was the officially appointed Sufi Master and, under Caliph al-Nāṣir, assisted in the revival of Islamic spiritual life.

Sumerian Psalms Religious literature, dating from the fourth millennium BCE, from both temple liturgies and private prayers of the individual, including prayers and praises addressed to the various gods, penitential compositions inspired by an awareness of human weakness and divine power, lamentations over misfortune, and so on.

See also: **Sumerian and Mesopotamian Spirituality** (1.3).

Sūrdās (*b.c.*1528) Original name, Madan Mohan; a *brāhmaṇ* who governed the province of Saṇḍīlā in Avadh during the reign of the Mughul emperor, Akbar; a scholar of Sanskrit, Hindi and Persian; later, became a *sannyāsin* (renunciate); died at Vārāṇasī, Uttar Pradesh; two of his hymns are included in the *Ādi Granth;* not to be confused with the blind Hindi poet, also called

Sūrdās, author of *Sūr Sāgar* ('Ocean of Sūr'), a devotee of Kṛishṇa and later a disciple of Vallabhāchārya.

Sushruta Saṃhitā (S) A medical text, probably originating sometime after 200 BCE, taking its final form by about 700 CE, and basing its medical science on the existence of three elementary substances – wind, phlegm and bile.

Suyūṭī, Abū al-Faḍl 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Bakr ibn Muḥammad Jalāl al-Dīn al-Khuḍayrī al- (*c.*1445–1505) A renowned Egyptian polymath, *ḥadīth* master, scholar of Islamic law, philologist, historian, Sufi of the *Shādhilīyah* order, and prolific author, who wrote on history, astronomy, geography, lexicography, medicine, dietetics, Sufism and, in fact, on virtually every branch of Islamic knowledge; also called *Ibn al-Kutub* (Son of Books); born in Cairo to a Turkish mother and non-Arab father, and raised as an orphan; studied many branches of Islamic religious knowledge at an early age, including *tafsīr* (commentary), *ḥadīth* (traditional sayings and deeds of Muḥammad), and *shāfi'ī* law; included among his approximately 150 *shaykhs* (teachers) were 'Ālam al-Dīn al-Bulqīnī, Sharaf al-Dīn al-Munāwī and Muḥyī al-Dīn al-Kafyājī.

A person of prodigious memory, Suyūṭī had memorized the *Qur'ān* by the age of eight, along with several works of Islamic religious law and Arabic grammar, later committing to memory as many as 200,000 *ḥadīth*. In 1496, he was named 'Supreme *Qāḍī* (Judge)' by the Caliph. He travelled widely throughout Egypt, Morocco, and thence eastward to Damascus, the Ḥijāz, Yemen and India. He was head teacher of *ḥadīth* at the Shaykhūnīyah school in Cairo for some time, and then at the *Baybarsīyah khānaqāh* (Sufi 'monastery'), from which he was ousted as a result of complaints from unhappy *shaykhs* whom he had replaced. He subsequently retired into scholarly seclusion, at the age of around 40, in the Garden of al-Miqyās, on the banks of the Nile, shunning the company even of old friends, and refusing invitations and gifts, monetary and otherwise, even from the *sulṭān*. Devoting himself to his writing, he wrote nearly 600 books and treatises, many quite short, some controversial, and sometimes criticized for their lack of thoroughness. His works included *Jam'al-Jawāmi'* ('Collection of Collections'), a 10–volume compilation of *ḥadīth; Itqān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* ('Proficiency in Quranic Sciences'), which became a standard reference work; and a number of works in defence of Sufism.

Tahmuras Fragments Fragments of Zoroastrian texts obtained from Iran by the Parsee Zoroastrian of India, Tahmuras Dinshawji Anklesaria, during the late nineteenth century. Tahmuras was responsible for obtaining a number of Avestan texts with their Pahlavi translations from Iran, adding significantly to the number of available Zoroastrian texts.

Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa (S) A *Brāhmaṇa* of the *Yajur Veda:* associated with the school of Tittiri, a school of the *Yajur Veda.*

See also: **Brāhmaṇas**.

Taittirīya Upanishad (S) *Taittirīya* means the 'pupils of Tittiri', referring to a school of the *Yajur Veda,* to which the *Upanishad* belongs; one of the older *Upanishads,* regarded as a principal one; covers a broad spectrum of Upanishadic topics, including correct pronunciation while chanting and in meditation, various rituals and forms of meditation for different types of student, the ideal of a householder's life, the removal of ignorance by the knowledge of *Brahman,* the nature of *Brahman,* and so on.

See also: **Upanishads**.

Talmud (He/Ar) *Lit.* study; a record of the discussion and interpretation of the *Mishnah* by the generations of rabbis in the academies of Babylonia and Palestine. The Palestinian or Jerusalem *Talmud* dates from the fifth century CE, and is about half the size of the Babylonian *Talmud,* which is the more significant of the two; also called the *Gemara* (completion), both terms often being used to refer to the entire collection of the *Mishnah,* along with the various subsequent texts.

Tammuz Liturgies Texts related to the cult of the Sumerian deity, Damuzi (*lit.* faithful son; Akkadian, Tammuz), god of fertility, first mentioned in texts from around 2600–2334 BCE, but certainly of far earlier origin. Originally, a pastoral deity, whose common epithet was 'Shepherd', Tammuz evolved into an agricultural deity when the cult spread to Assyria during the second and first millennia BCE. Here, the deity appears to have been symbolized in rituals by an arrangement of vegetables, honey and other foods. The Tammuz cult was centred on two annual festivals, one celebrating his marriage to the goddess Inanna, the other lamenting his death at the hands of underworld demons. A number of myths are related of Tammuz, which – like much mythology – are often mutually inconsistent. The liturgies relate to the mythology, or to the deity's role in nature and associated human needs.

See also: **Inanna's Descent, Sumerian and Mesopotamian Spirituality** (1.3).

Tāṇḍya Mahā Brāhmaṇa (S) A *Brāhmaṇa* of the *Sāma Veda,* associated with the school of Tāṇḍin, a school of the *Sāma Veda.*

See also: **Brāhmaṇas**.

Tanya See **Shne'ur Zalman of Lyady**.

Tào Té Chīng (Dào Dé Jīng) (C) *Lit.* classic *(chīng)* of the Way *(Tào)* and its power *(té)*; also translated as the *Canon of the Way and its Virtue*, the *Way and its Power*, and the *Way of Life*; also called the *Book of Lăo Tzu* or just the *Lăo Tzu*; the fundamental text of both philosophical (early mystical) and the later religious Taoism.

See **Taoism** (1.14).

Teachings of Aḥikar A folk text dating from as early as the fifth century BCE, probably of Aramaean-Assyrian origin, existing in a number ancient Near Eastern languages; well known among the Jewish colonists in southern Egypt, and widespread in the Aramaic-speaking world; an example of the Wisdom tradition, consisting of aphorisms spoken by the legendary Aḥikar to his adopted son, Nadan.

Teachings of Silvanus A Nag Hammadi treatise in which the author sets out to demonstrate that the teachings of Jesus were compatible with both Jewish and Greek mystical tradition; considers the *Logos* or *Nous*, approached by the cultivation of "*logismos* (meditation)", as the means to become free from the "Adversary" and the "wild, savage beasts" of human weaknesses, and attain salvation.

Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs A pseudo-epigraphic, pietistic Jewish work, written in Greek, probably dating from the late second century with later Christian interpolations; purports to relate the last words of the twelve sons of Jacob, founders of the twelve tribes of Israel; modelled on Jacob's blessing of his sons in *Genesis* (49:1–33), but containing extended moral exhortations related to the supposed sin or virtue of each of the twelve. Each testament contains autobiographical details of the patriarch, elaborated by folk legend; based on a belief in physical resurrection and the Day of Judgment; extant in several Greek manuscripts, and in Armenian and Slavonic translations.

Testimony of Truth A poorly preserved gnostic treatise from the Nag Hammadi library, of which almost half is lost; a didactic homily by a gnostic Christian, criticizing both the Jewish law and catholic Christianity, decrying (for example) a belief in Christ without any real (gnostic) knowledge of Christ's teachings, and the belief in resurrection of the material body; describes the god of the Adam and Eve story in *Genesis* as a "malicious grudger"; emphasizes baptism into the "life-giving Word", through which a person is truly "born again" and attains salvation.

Tevijja Sutta (Pa) A Buddhist text in Pali, contrasting the *brāhmaṇ* (priestly) culture with Buddhist ideals.

Thanksgiving Hymns One of the Dead Sea Scrolls found in the caves at Khirbet Qumran, containing beautiful and often ecstatic psalms of praise and thanksgiving; often attributed to the Teacher of Righteousness, although there is no direct evidence for this.

See also: **Dead Sea Scrolls**, **The Essenes** (1.4).

Theodotus (*fl.*160–170) A mid-second-century gnostic who taught in Asia Minor, some of whose teachings were preserved by Clement of Alexandria (*c.*150–215) in a collection of fragments he headed, *Excerpta ex Theodoto* ('Extracts from Theodotus'), a sort of unstructured personal notebook of material tacked onto his *Stromata* ('Miscellanies'), and which includes his own comments, often difficult to distinguish from his source material; from the school of the early-second-century gnostic teacher, Valentinus.

Being a set of somewhat haphazard personal notes written down by Clement for his own use, the text is not easy to follow. It discusses the complex Valentinian gnostic teachings, quoting frequently from the Christian gospels, especially John and Matthew, and the letters of Paul. It elaborates on the role of the *Logos* as the *Monogenēs* (Only-begotten), the "First-created of God", also identified with the "Name". The Saviour or Son is described as an "offspring of the essential *Logos*". Of baptism, he says, "Baptism is called death and an end of the old life, when we take leave of the evil principalities; but it is also called life according to Christ."

Theognis (*c.*570–490 BCE) Born at Megara, near Athens; an ancient Greek gnomic and elegiac poet, a gnome being a proverb or moral aphorism, and elegiac verse being quatrains in iambic pentameter, alternate lines rhyming. Some of his poems consist of praise of the aristocracy and hatred of the lower class rulers who had taken control of Megara; some are love poems to his beloved, a boy named Cyrnus; others contain traditional Greek wisdom sayings.

Thought of Norea One of the shortest texts in the Nag Hammadi library, containing only 52 lines of text; an untitled text using both Jewish and Greek mystical expression. God is represented as the Primal Thought, at one with the "Voice of Truth, upright *Nous*, untouchable *Logos* and Ineffable Voice"; demonstrates that the Greek *Nous* (usually translated by scholars as 'Mind') and *Logos* (usually translated as 'Word' or 'Reason') were both used by gnostics to refer to the same divine creative Power.

Thousand and Twelve Questions (Md. *Alf Trisar Shuialia*) A collection of seven varied Mandaean texts, originally separate, taking its name from the first and longest part; provides a detailed picture of the rites and beliefs of a gnostic sect; previously given to a young Mandaean priest only at his initiation, and usually never imparted to the laity.

Three Steles of Seth A gnostic text from the Nag Hammadi library; presented as a revelation to Dositheos, a Samaritan gnostic, said in the *Clementine Recognitions* to have been a disciple of John the Baptist. According to gnostic tradition, the gnostic wisdom of Adam passed to his third son, Seth. Subsequently lost for long ages, it was again revealed to the followers of the Sethian school, in this case, through Dositheos. In a Jewish legend recorded by the Jewish historian, Josephus (*c*.37–100 CE), and based on the Bible story, the descendants of Seth followed his ways for seven generations, increasing their knowledge. Falling into depravity and forewarned of impending divine judgment, they preserved this knowledge for posterity on two steles (tablets), one of stone (to survive flood) and one of brick (to survive fire).

According to the text, Dositheos is granted a vision of three steles of Seth, which he commits to memory, and reproduces for the benefit of the "elect". The three steles consist of prayers, blessings or eulogies addressed to the Self-begotten Son (Seth); the virginal Spirit, *Barbelo* (the Mother); and the unbegotten Father.

Thunder: Perfect Mind An unusual text from the Nag Hammadi library codices, not classifiable as the work of any particular school, written in the first person in a self-proclamatory style ("I am …"), where the "I" appears to be the transcendant, yet immanent, divine Power; of often contrasting identifications, such as "the first and the last", "the hearing that can be heard in everything", the "speech that cannot be grasped", "the Name of the Sound" and "the Sound of the Name"; somewhat similar in style to chapter 11 of the *Bhagavad Gītā,* where Kṛishṇa proclaims himself as the divine presence in all things.

Tilimsānī, 'Afīf al-Dīn A thirteenth-century Sufi, presumed to be from Tilimsen (previously Tlemsen), in northwestern Algeria; a disciple of Ibn 'Arabī and friend of Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī.

Timothy, Patriarch of Alexandria A Coptic Patriarch of Alexandria (the 23rd) during the fourth century.

Titus See **pastoral letters**.

Treatise on the Resurrection A Christian gnostic text from the Nag Hammadi codices, in which the unnamed writer addresses himself to "my son Rheginos" concerning the true nature of the resurrection. He says that Jesus "swallowed up death" by raising himself to the "imperishable *aeon*" (*i.e.* God), and that those who are devoted to Jesus will be drawn to him in a "spiritual resurrection". Resurrection, he maintains, is only of the "living" parts of a person, not the "visible" or "dead" parts, and it can and should be attained during this present life by freeing oneself from "the divisions and the fetters" of physical existence.

Trimorphic Protennoia *Lit.* the three-formed primal Thought; a Nag Hammadi library text relating the story of the descent of the divine Word or Voice into this world, as the Son and Saviour, initiation into which is described as immersion in the "Water of Life" and the receiving of the "five seals"; contains various additions from the hand of a later Christian editor.

Tripartite Tractate An elaborate, comprehensive, untitled gnostic treatise from the Nag Hammadi library, probably originating in the Valentinian gnostic school, and written during the first half of the third century; divided by scribal decorations into three parts, hence its modern name. The text first describes the emanation of two powers from the primal, divine and utterly transcendant Father – the Son and the Church – the three forming the divine *Pleroma* (fullness). Further creation comes about through the agency of the "abundant love" and the independent choice of the *Logos*, though in accordance with the Father's will. From the outward-going creative activity of the *Logos* are formed material forces, while his inward-going repentance and desire to return to the Source produce more spiritual forces. The higher aspect of the *Logos* then returns to the *Pleroma* to plead intercession for his lower part. From the higher part is formed the Saviour, the Son, whose purpose is to grant gnostic experience both to the *aeons* within the *Pleroma* and to those without.

The text then describes the creation of man through the agency of the Demiurge, who forms man's physical and subtle aspects, and the *Logos*, who provides his spiritual part. The third section of the treatise describes the advent of the Saviour, and the spectrum of ways in which he is greeted by the people of the world – from the dedicated gnostic to those who are altogether materially minded. The concluding portion of the manuscript speaks of the salvation of "those who are called", though the manuscript is increasingly fragmentary and difficult to follow. The work ends with a hymn in praise of the Saviour.

Tukārām (*c.* 1598–1649) A poet-Saint *(Sant)*, well known in India, where he is often described as the finest writer in Marathi, though he wrote in the

vernacular language of the time; born into a family of farmers in Dehū, near Pūnā (now Puṇe) in Maharashtra, who made a living selling grain from their farm shop, and were devoted to *Viṭṭhal,* a local idol of the deity, *Vishṇu,* at Paṇḍharpur; writes that he lost his wife and son, and incurred heavy business losses in a great famine some time before 1619; lived the life of a solitary for some time before receiving initiation from Bābājī Rāghav Chaitanya in 1619; subsequently lost all further interest in the family business, giving his share to his younger brother; remarried to a woman who, though devoted to him, grumbled at him continually for subjecting them and their children to a life of poverty; thanked God for this in his poetry, since (he writes) it saved him from attachment; persecuted by members of the Hindu orthodoxy for having the affront (being a low-caste farmer and grain seller) to teach about God.

Tukārām composed thousands of poems *(abhangs)* advocating love and devotion for God, and the practice of the divine Name *(Nām)* as the means of finding Him within and of gaining liberation from the law of *karma* and the cycle of birth and death. He also writes in praise of his own *Satguru* (true *Guru*); he denounces all ceremonial forms of worship, and teaches that all human beings are equal in the eyes of God, and so on. His teachings are those commonly associated with the Saints *(Sants)* of India. Nearly 5,000 of his poems have been collected together under the titles *Sārth Shrī Tukārāmāchī Gāthā* and *Shrī Tukārām Bāvāñchyā Abhangāñchī Gāthā.*

Tulsīdās (*c.*1532–1623) A well-known Indian poet who lived and died in Vārāṇasī, Uttar Pradesh; born, probably in Rājapur, into a very poor family; author of the epic poem and popular Hindi classic, *Rām Charit Mānas* ('Sacred Lake of the Acts of Rāma') – a version of the great Sanskrit epic, the *Rāmāyaṇa;* written in *Avadhī,* an eastern Hindi dialect, between 1574 and 1576–77.

Tulsīdās is regarded as the greatest devotional poet of medieval India, and the cultural influence of his poem has been immense. Though unlikely to have been his intention, the poem's success has been largely responsible for replacing the worship of Kṛishṇa with that of *Rāma* in North India.

Rām Charit Mānas extols – among other things – devotion *(bhakti)* to a personal God *(Rāma)* and to the mystic Name *(Nām),* also exemplifying the conduct of the ideal husband and ruler (Rāma), wife (Sītā) and brother (Lakshmaṇa). Tulsīdās is believed to have been influenced to some extent by the earlier medieval work, *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa,* which sought to synthesize the philosophical *Advaita Vedānta* and the devotional cult of *Rāma.* In addition that of a good story, part of the poem's appeal is the way in which Tulsīdās brings together many of the universal elements in Hindu philosophy and religion.

His eclectic viewpoint is also seen in the variety of the other 11 works attributed with some certainty to him. They include *Kṛishṇa Gītāvalī,* a

collection of songs in praise of Kṛishṇa; *Vinayapatrikā* ('Petition'), a collection of hymns addressed to *Rāma;* and *Kavitāvalī*, relating stories of Rāma.

Tulsī Sāhib (*c.*1763–1843) An Indian Saint *(Sant)* and poet. According to an biographical note in the introduction to a 1909 edition of his *Ratan Sāgar* ('Ocean of Jewels'), he was born into a noble *brāhmaṇ* family; developed an aversion to worldly life in his boyhood; renounced everything and became a recluse, eventually settling in Hāthras, near Agra, Uttar Pradesh.

According to a similar note in a 1911 edition of his *Ghaṭ Rāmāyaṇ* ('*Rāmāyaṇa* within the Body'), he was the eldest son of the *peshvās* (administrative rulers) of Pūnā (now Puṇe) in Maharashtra in southwest India. He was a *brāhmaṇ*, whose real name was Shyām Rāv; was married at an early age, against his own wishes, to Lakshmī Bāī, and was the father of one son. His spiritually inclined father wanted to renounce his position in favour of his eldest son, in order to spend the rest of his life in devotion. Shyām Rāv, himself averse to life at court, fled the palace the day before his investiture, probably disguised as a *sadhu*. All search proving futile, his younger brother was made the new ruler. Shyām Rāv led a wandering life for many years until he settled in Hāthras, where he became known as Tulsī Sāhib.

In Hāthras, he was also known as Dakhanī Bābā (sage from the south). Among his disciples were Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh and his family. His writings indicate that he taught the path of the mystic Name *(Nām)* or Word *(Shabd)*, but when and where he met his Master and who his Master was are unknown.

Towards the end of his life, it is said that his consciousness was so drawn up into the spiritual realms that his lower limbs remained numb. Being unable to walk, his disciples had to carry him around.

Tustarī, Abū Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allāh Sahl al- (818–896) Born and lived a quiet life in Tustar, Khūzistān, in Iran; an Islamic theologian with mystical tendencies; received his basic education from his maternal uncle, Muḥammad ibn Sawwār (who transmitted *ḥadīth* on the authority of Sufyān al-Thawrī), and Ḥamzah al-'Abbādānī, a little-known spiritual instructor living in the *ribāt* (monastery) where al-Tustarī had a vision of God's Greatest Name *(Ism Allāh al-A'ẓam)*, written across the sky in green light, from east to west; met Dhū al-Nun Miṣrī; credited with formulating many fundamental *Sunnī* doctrines, including an analysis of the steps involved in devotion and in *tawbah* (repentance), the turning towards God; the early teacher of al-Ḥallāj; died at Baṣrah.

Al-Tustarī founded the *Sālimīyah* school of semi-mystical Muslim theology, named after his disciple, Muḥammad ibn Sālim al-Baṣrī. The *Sālimīyah*

taught that on the Day of Judgement, God would appear in human form. His light would then envelop all creation, and all created things would be granted salvation. They also believed that since God created man in His own image, union with Him could be achieved by constant inner contemplation.

Udāna (Pa) A collection of 82 sayings of the Buddha, each one illustrated by the incident which, it is believed, gave rise to the saying; a part of the *Khuddaka Nikāya* ('Short Collection'), the fifth and last section of the Pali canon.

'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (581–644) The second *Khalīfah* (Caliph, Successor) after Muḥammad, following the death of Abū Bakr in 634; a father-in-law of Muḥammad; credited with contributing greatly to the spread of Islam; believed to have established the Muslim era dating system (AH) from the year of the *al-Hijrah* (the year of Muḥammad's flight to Madīnah); died of wounds inflicted by a disaffected slave.

See also: **The Death of Muḥammad** (1.10).

'Umar Khayyām (*c.*1048–1122) Full name, Ghiyāth al-Dīn Abū al-Fatḥ 'Umar ibn Ibrāhīm al-Khayyāmī al-Nīshāpūrī; commonly anglicized as Omar Khayyam, *Khayyām* meaning 'tentmaker', possibly relating to his father's occupation; a brilliant Persian polymath, whose studies included mathematics, astronomy, medicine, philosophy, metaphysics, history and law; well known in his own time for his scientific achievements; educated in science and philosophy at his native Nīshāpūr and later at Balkh; moved to Samarkand where he wrote a significant treatise on algebra; requested by the Saljūq *sulṭān,* Malik Shāh, to make the astronomical observations required for the reform of the calendar, thus contributing to the development of the *Ta'rīkh-i Jalālī* calendar; collaborated with other astronomers in the building of an observatory in the city of Iṣfahān; undertook a pilgrimage to Mecca after the death of the *sulṭān,* returning thence to Nīshāpūr, where he worked as a teacher, occasionally serving the court

'Umar Khayyām was made famous in the West by Edward Fitzgerald's free rendering in English verse of his *Rubā'īyāt,* a collection of quatrains (four-line verses), published in 1859. Since his verses passed unnoticed in his own time, some scholars have doubted whether they were really written by him, although A.J. Arberry has made a convincing case for the authenticity of about 250 of them. Fitzgerald's free paraphrasing include such memorable lines as "Take the cash, and let the credit go" and "The flower that once has blown forever dies." The verses themselves indicate an honest and questing mind, concerned by the nature of Reality and eternity, the transience of life, human ignorance, the dubious nature of religious faith, and

the existence or otherwise of divine providence and the afterlife. They advocate a modest appreciation of the pleasures and beauties of material existence. 'Umar Khayyām died at Nīshāpūr around 1131.

In recent times, Arabic and Persian manuscripts on metaphysics, Sufism and mathematics, attributed to 'Umar Khayyām, have been discovered and published in Iran.

Untitled Text See **Bruce Codex**.

Upanishads (S) *Lit.* to sit near, to sit close, implying sitting near or close to a *guru;* a collection of 108 largely philosophical compositions in prose and poetry, probably written between 900 BCE and 600 BCE, exploring and expanding upon the mystical and philosophical dimensions of the *Vedas;* the fundamental texts of the *Vedānta* school of Indian philosophy.

See also: **The Vedas and the Upanishads** (1.11).

'Uthmān ibn 'Affān (*d.*656) The third *Khalīfah* (Caliph, Successor); credited with establishing an authoritative version of the *Qur'ān* from previously existing versions, and from those who had memorized the entire *Qur'ān* by heart; murdered in a revolt against the Caliphate in 656.

See also: **The Death of Muḥammad** (1.10).

'Uways al-Qaranī A mystic with whom the Prophet Muḥammad is believed to have associated, although the historical facts are unknown. According to the traditional legend, 'Uways lived in the Yemen and, although it is believed that the two never met, they knew of each other, communicating in dreams and visions. After the death of Muḥammad, it is related that 'Uways came to Madīnah, to receive a mantle which the Prophet had left for him. Some have interpreted this to mean that 'Uways was appointed by Muḥammad as his successor. The Sufi order, *'Uwaysīyah,* was founded in his name. Sufis who have no *Shaykh,* but have been the recipients of divine grace are also called *'Uwaysīs.*

Valī, Shāh Ni'mat Allāh Nūr al-Dīn ibn Allāh (1330–1431) Born in Aleppo; educated in Shīrāz with Jalāl al-Dīn Khwārazmī and 'Aḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī; founder of the *Ni'mat Allāhīyah* Sufi order, the most prominent and widespread of the *Shī'ah* Sufi orders, with numerous branches in India as well as Persia; initiated into Sufism by the Yemeni historian and traditionalist, 'Abd Allāh al-Yāfi'ī; travelled widely, visiting Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Azerbaijan; presented himself in Transoxania (now roughly Uzbekistan) as a *Murshid*

(spiritual Master) and propagator of the *Ni'mat Allāhīyah* Sufi order; recruited so many nomads from the area of Shahr-i Sabz that he was expelled from Transoxania by Tīmūr; died in Māhān, where he was buried close to the *madrasah* (religious school) and *khānaqāh* (Sufi 'monastery'); a writer of exegetical essays on the *Qur'ān*, several hundred treatises *(rasā'il)* on various subjects, a commentary on Ibn 'Arabī's, *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* ('Bezels of Wisdom'), and a *Dīvān*, containing verses expounding the nature of *waḥdat al-wujūd* (unity of being).

Vallabhāchārya (*c.*1481–1533) Born into a *brāhmaṇ* family in Vārāṇasī, showing early signs of spiritual and intellectual potential; said to have initiated his first disciple when still a child; founder of a *Vaishṇava* school of *Vedānta* which came to be known as *Vallabhasampradāya* (doctrine of Vallabha), *Pushṭi-mārga* (way of well-being) or *Shuddha Advaita* (pure non-dualism), teaching that through love, devotion and surrender to Kṛishṇa (an incarnation of *Vishṇu*), rather than fasting and asceticism, the *jīvātma* can reach *Kṛishṇa loka* (region of Kṛishṇa, *i.e. Brahman*), and become one with him; believed that salvation is only possible by the grace of God; had his headquarters at Mathurā, where – at the foot of Mount Govardhana – he found an image of Kṛishṇa (Shrī Nāthajī), which became a central cultic symbol of his school; travelled extensively throughout India in pursuit of his mission; originally a member of the *Rudra* school, founded by Vishṇusvāmin, whose philosophy closely resembles that of Vallabhāchārya; married, with two sons, one of whom (Viṭṭhala) succeeded him as head of the school; became a *sannyāsin* (renunciate) shortly before he died.

Vālmīki, Ṛishi An ancient sage, traditionally regarded as the author of the *Rāmāyaṇa,* the first poetic work in classical Sanskrit, probably composed some time between 750 and 500 BCE.

Vārān Bhāī Gurdās Verses composed by the scholar and devotee, Bhāī Gurdās (*c.*1551–1636), a contemporary of the third, fourth, fifth and sixth *Gurus* in the line of Guru Nānak. For authentic details of Guru Nānak's life, most scholars rely on the *Vārān Bhāī Gurdās* and on certain verses incorporated into the *Ādi Granth,* rather than on the *janamsākhīs* (life stories) composed some 50 to 80 years after the death of the *Guru.* A *vār* (pl. *vārān*) is a Punjabi verse form, used by the *Gurus* in the line of Guru Nānak. The *Ādi Granth* contains 22 *vārs:* three by Guru Nānak, four by Guru Amardās, eight by Guru Rāmdās, six by Guru Arjun, and one by the brothers, Sattā and Balvand, disciples of Guru Arjun.

See also: **Bhāī Gurdās**.

Vedānta (S/H) *Lit.* end *(anta)* of the *Vedas (veda);* the quintessence of the *Vedas;* one of the six systems of Hindu philosophy; a monistic philosophy based on the *Upanishads.*

See also: **Vedānta** (1.11).

Vedāntasāra (S) *Lit.* essence *(sāra)* of *Vedānta;* a succinct and highly esteemed summary of the meaning of the key terms in *Vedānta,* written by Sadānanda Yogīndra Sarasvatī, a fifteenth-century Vedantic scholar and *sannyāsin* (monk) of the *Sarasvatī* order of Shankara's school. Other writers, such as Rāmānuja, have also written works with the same name.

Vedas (S) *Lit.* knowledge; the oldest and most sacred Hindu scriptures; written in archaic Sanskrit, probably between 1500 BCE and 1200 BCE, although scholarly opinion varies, some placing them much earlier; four collections *(saṃhitās)* of hymns, liturgical chants and sacred formulae recited by priests during sacrificial rites and ceremonies; preserved orally for centuries by various priestly families before being committed to writing.

The four *saṃhitās* are the *Ṛig Veda,* the *Yajur Veda,* the *Sāma Veda* and the *Atharva Veda.* Narrowly defined, the *Vedas* comprise just these four *saṃhitās.* More broadly speaking, the *Vedas* also include three other types of text which have become associated with them over the course of time. These are: the *Brāhmaṇas,* prose texts explaining the significance of the rituals; *Āraṇyakas* (*lit.* forest), intended as reading matter for forest hermits, containing esoteric reflections as well as descriptions of important rites; and the *Upanishads,* philosophical, mystical and speculative texts on the nature of Reality.

The oldest and foremost of the four *Vedas* is the *Ṛig Veda,* it is also the main source of the hymns found in the *Yajur* and *Sāma Vedas* – the second and third *Vedas.* The *Sāma Veda* is also known as the '*Veda* of Chants', the verses being used for melodic recitations. The collection of hymns, incantations and magic spells in the *Atharva Veda* represents a more folk level of the Vedic religion than the other three.

See also: **Brāhmaṇas, Upanishads.**

Vinayapatrikā (H) See **Tulsīdās.**

Virgil (70–19 BCE) Full name, Publius Vergilius Maro; a Roman poet of a peasant family, born at Andes, near Mantua; educated in classical Greek and Roman literature, rhetoric and philosophy at Cremona, Milan and Rome. Virgil's poetry reads with rhythm and melody, exhibiting significant structural skill, and expressing universal aspects of human nature and

experience often in the context of contemporary events. In the *Eclogues*, for instance, he writes of the sufferings of farmers dispossessed of their land for the benefit of veteran soldiers' pensions (as happened to Virgil himself), of farmland fallen into neglect when the farmers are forced to go to war, and of the simple joy of the Italian countryside.

Virgil was regarded by the Romans as their national poet, the spokesman of their beliefs and achievements. He is most remembered for his epic poem, the *Aeneid,* which relates with vivid mythological colour and imagination, the adventures of the 'original Roman', Aeneas, an exiled Trojan prince after the Greek sack of Troy (C12th BCE) who founded the city of Lavinium, the parent town of Alba Longa and Rome. The *Aeneid* presents the Roman mission as the divinely guided civilizing of the world. It commends the best of Roman life and culture, being reborn, in the hopeful mind of Virgil, during the long and peaceful rule of Augustus (27 BCE – 14 CE), after a period of intense civil war, which had been regarded by many Romans as insane. The family of Augustus traced its origins to Aeneas. The epic is no eulogy of Roman life, however, but presents both sides of the picture – the human suffering resulting from violence and war, as well as the benefits of civilization and social stability. Virgil has had a major influence on European literature, and has been the inspiration for many epic poets since his time.

Vishṇu Purāṇa (S) One of the 18 principal *Purāṇas,* exalting the deity *Vishṇu.*

See also: **Purāṇas**.

Vishṇu Sahasranāma (S) *Lit.* the thousand *(sahasra)* names *(nāma)* of *Vishṇu,* whose repetition is regarded as a meritorious act of devotion, performed daily by many *Vaishṇavas.*

Vivekānanda, Swāmī (1863–1922) Born in Calcutta, and a graduate of the Christian Mission College, later becoming a disciple of Rāmakṛishṇa. His speech on the philosophical aspects of Hinduism at the Congress of World Religions in Chicago in 1893 was greatly lauded and created considerable interest in Indian philosophy. One of the great exponents of *Vedānta.*

Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach Also called *Ecclesiasticus;* a book included in the biblical *Apocrypha;* written in Hebrew by Jesus ben Sirach, in Palestine, around 180–175 BCE; translated into Greek by the author's grandson shortly before 132 BCE; was included in the Greek *Septuagint,* from where it was accepted into the Christian Bible, but was later excluded from the Jewish canon and Protestant Bibles; emphasizes the importance of Wisdom (Gk. *Sophia*) as the creative Power, which is identified with the Mosaic law

(Torah), also containing eulogies of biblical personalities, and much advice of an ethical and moral nature; extant in Greek and Hebrew manuscripts.

Wisdom of Solomon A book included in the biblical *Apocrypha,* belonging to the tradition of Wisdom literature; extant and probably written in Greek, though parts of it may have been originally composed in Hebrew; of uncertain date, attributed by some to first-century BCE Alexandria. The first part deals with the fate of the righteous and the wicked; the second part presents Wisdom as the personified creative Power; the third part is a commentary on the biblical story of the exodus from Egypt and the ten plagues.

Wordsworth, William (1770–1850) English romantic poet and poet laureate (1843–50), whose descriptions of nature were much inspired by the Lake District, where he lived for much of his life. The second of five children of a moderately prosperous estate manager, William lost his mother when only seven, and his father when he was 13. The orphans were sent by their uncle to a Lake District school in Hawkshead, where he was educated in classics, literature and mathematics.

Entered St John's College Cambridge in 1787, electing to pass his days in idleness, receiving an undistinguished degree; spent the summer vacation of 1790 on a walking holiday in France where he was caught up in the wake of enthusiasm following the fall of the Bastille in 1789, becoming an ardent supporter of the republican ideal; returned to France in 1791, where he became romantically involved with Annette Vallon; returned to England before their child, Caroline, was born in December 1792, and was unable to return due to the outbreak of war between France and England.

Wordsworth then passed three or four miserable and more or less penniless years in London before becoming the recipient of a friend's legacy in 1795. This made possible a reunion with his beloved sister Dorothy, and in 1797, the two moved into a house in Bristol. Here, Wordsworth became friends with fellow poet, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, with whom he collaborated on *Lyrical Ballads,* often described as the first instance of English romantic poetry, which opened with Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and closed with Wordsworth's *Lines Written above Tintern Abbey.* Their intention was to use the English of the ordinary man, taking subjects from everyday life, thus breaking with the Neo-Classical tradition. Their work paved the way for twentieth-century verse. Influenced by Coleridge, the affection and care of his sister and the healing touch of nature, Wordsworth left behind his earlier long poems, inclining more to the short poems in praise of nature for which he is most remembered.

In 1799, Wordsworth moved into Dove Cottage, at the head of Lake Grasmere, in the Lake District, where he lived for eight productive years. In

1802, during a short-lived break in the hostilities between France and England, he went to Calais where he met his daughter for the first time, and was reconciled to Annette. Returning to England, he married Mary Hutchinson, a childhood friend, and by 1810 had produced a family of three sons and two daughters. In 1805, his brother John, a ship's captain, was drowned, the experience of grief and distress resulting in a noticeable humanizing of Wordsworth's style. In 1808, he moved to a larger home in Grasmere, and five years later to Rydal Mount, near Ambleside, where he passed the reminder of his life. In 1813, he accepted the post of distributor of stamps for Westmorland, a position which gave him an annual salary of 400 pounds. In 1843, he succeeded his friend Robert Southey as poet laureate, a post he held until his death in 1850.

Wordsworth's poetry is often divided into two periods, early and late, most readers preferring the freshness of the young romantic revolutionary to the aging Tory and Anglican humanist. A habitual tinkerer with his poems, a number were published in revised editions, of which the original versions are often deemed to be better. As time passed, he lost his youthful capacity to see the "celestial light" infusing all things, coming to view it as illusory, "a poet's dream". Until the publication in 1820 of *The River Duddon,* his poetry was the subject of persistent scorn by the critics, and only by the mid–1830s was his reputation established among both critics and the general public.

Wovoka (Wagud, 'Wood cutter') (1856–1932) A Paiute prophet, dreamer, visionary and Native American leader from Pyramid Lake, Mason Valley, Nevada, 40 miles northwest of the Walker Lake Reservation; founder, in 1890, of the Ghost Dance; son of Tavibo; also called Jack or Jocko Wilson, and known as the Messiah or the Prophet.

See **Some Recent Native Americans** (1.14).

Yajur Veda (S) See **Vedas**.

Yalkut Ḥadash (He) *Lit.* new *(ḥadash)* anthology *(yalkut);* composed in the seventeenth century by Israel ben Benjamin of Belzec, Poland; a collection of sermons taken from the *midrash, aggadah* (legend and folk narrative) and *Kabbalah.*

Yalkut Re'ubeni (He) *Lit.* Reuben's anthology *(Yalkut);* composed in the late seventeenth century by Reuben Hoeshke of Prague; a collection of Kabbalistic *aggadah* (legends and narratives) drawn from 500 years of Kabbalistic literature.

Yasht (Av) From the Avestan *yeshti* (worship by praise); one of the *nasks* (books) of the Zoroastrian *Avestā* (the Zoroastrian scriptures in Avestan); a collection of hymns in praise of the various deities (*yazata*, worshipful ones) of the Zoroastrian pantheon.

See **Zarathushtra and Zoroastrianism** (1.3).

Yasna (Av) *Lit.* offering, sacrifice; offering with prayers, hence worship; an Avestan word, related to the Sanskrit *yajña* (sacrifice); the Zoroastrian *Book of Worship;* the foremost *nask* (book) of the *Avestā,* the Zoroastrian scriptures in Avestan, containing the oldest strata of Zoroastrian writings, including the *Gāthās* of Zarathushtra, his sole surviving work.

See also: **Zarathushtra and Zoroastrianism** (1.3).

Yogananda, Paramhansa (1893–1952) Original name, Mukunda Lāl Ghosh; born in Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh; joined a monastic order at the age of about 21; initiated by his *Guru,* Shrī Yukteshwar (1855–1936); in 1918, founded a *yoga* school in Rāñchī, now capital of the newly-created state of Jharkhanda; founded a *yoga* institute in Los Angeles in 1925, teaching *kriyā yoga,* which is somewhat similar to the *rāja yoga* of Patañjali's *Yoga Sūtras;* established the Self-Realization Fellowship in Los Angeles in 1935, with centres throughout the USA; given the title *paramahaṃsa* (supreme soul, *lit.* supreme swan) by his *Guru,* in 1935; died in 1952, following which the Self-Realization Fellowship and its centres have been managed by his disciples and later followers; well known from his book, *The Autobiography of a Yogi* (1946), which describes his life in India, his time with his *Guru,* and his meetings with many of India holy men and women.

In modern times, there are Self-Realization Fellowship centres worldwide, where *kriyā yoga* classes and services for worship are held, the latter combining elements of Hinduism and Christianity with meditation, discourses and music. The Fellowship has both lay members and those who have taken monastic vows, and who play the part of a clergy.

Yogashikhā Upanishad (S) Also called *Yogashikshā Upanishad; lit.* 'crest or peak *(shikhā)* of' or 'instruction *(shikshā)* in' *yoga Upanishad;* belongs to the *Yajur Veda;* set as the answer to a question on the nature of the path leading from illusion and bondage to salvation, the answer being the *yoga* of mystic knowledge *(jñāna),* which includes control of the six *chakras,* control of the mind and senses, and contact with the inner *Nāda* (Sound); advocates *kuṇḍalinī yoga* as the means of the soul's ascent.

See also: **Upanishads**.

Yoga Sūtras (S) The basic principles of yogic doctrine, in four sections; traditionally attributed to Patañjali, also called Gonardīya and Goṇikāputra. The first section of the text is entitled *samādhi* (absorption in superconsciousness); the second, the practice of *yoga;* the third, *siddhis* (supernatural powers); the fourth, *kaivalya* (liberation). The attribution to Patañjali is uncertain, since the first three sections have been dated to the second century BCE, and the fourth to the fifth century CE, although opinions vary considerably. Moreover, the name Patañjali, implying divine descent from the mythological Serpent, *Shesha,* seems to be a pseudonym, since it denotes no caste. Patañjali is also the name of a grammarian who wrote another Hindu classic, the *Mahābhāshya* ('Great Commentary'), concerning the grammarian, Paṇini, but he is generally conceded by modern scholars to be a different individual from the author of the *Yoga Sūtras.* Patañjali has also been used as a pseudonym by a number of writers on subjects as varied as medicine, music and alchemy.

Zand (Pv) *Lit.* commentary; the Pahlavi commentaries on the *Avestā* (the Zoroastrian scriptures in Avestan); also used as an abbreviation of *Zand-Avestā.*

Zand-Avestā (Av) The *Avestā* (Zoroastrian scriptures in Avestan), together with the traditional interpretative commentaries in Avestan.

Zarathushtra Spitamā An Iranian mystic, born perhaps around 1500 BCE, though traditions and scholarly research vary widely; said to have been a prolific writer, although only a small number of his *gāthās,* written in Avestan, have survived to present times. The Zoroastrian religion, known in India as the Parsee religion, was founded in his name.

See **Zarathushtra and Zoroastrianism** (1.3).

Zayd ibn al-Ḥārith (*d.*630) A slave given to Muḥammad by his first wife, Khadījah. Later, Zayd's father found him, and tried to obtain his freedom, but Zayd would not leave the Prophet. Muḥammad therefore gave Zayd his freedom, making him an adopted son. Traditionally, Zayd is believed to have attained mystic realization through his love of and association with the Prophet, a story which is retold by Rūmī in his *Maśnavī* (I:3500*ff.*).

Zechariah The biblical book traditionally attributed to the late-sixth-century (BCE) prophet, Zechariah, regarded as one of the last of the prophets upon whom the Holy Spirit rested; comprised of two unrelated parts (chapters 1–8 and 9–14), written at different times by different authors. The first part, dated from its opening passage to 520 BCE, is post-exilic. It begins with a description of eight visions of Zechariah (1:7–6:8), and is largely preoccupied

with the return of the Jews from Babylonian exile and the rebuilding of the Temple. It goes on to recount a brief traditional history of Israel (7:1–14), followed by an anticipation of the messianic age that is to come (8:1–23).

The second part (undated and unascribed), from which Zechariah and the rebuilding of the Temple are absent, was almost certainly written at a later date, probably during the late fourth century (BCE). It is itself comprised of two sections: chapters 9–11 are almost entirely in verse, while chapters 12–14 are largely in prose. Written in a different style from chapters 1–8, chapters 9–11 refers to historical events which are difficult to identify with any certainty, and chapters 12–14 are eschatological, describing the trials and triumphs of Jerusalem in the last days. Its somewhat disorganized messianic teaching, prophesying the re-establishment of the house of David (ch. 12, *passim*), the coming of a humble and peace-loving Messiah (9:9–10), together with an obscure passage about someone who is "pierced" (12:10) are quoted or alluded to in the Christian gospels according to Matthew (21:4–5, 26:31, 27:9), Mark (14:27) and John (19:37).

Zephaniah The biblical book of one of the twelve 'minor prophets', Zephaniah (C7th BCE), characterized by the use of vivid poetic language denouncing the Israelites' neglect of *Yahweh* and their worship of the stars, and castigating the deity *Ba'al* and other aspects of Assyrian religion; contains a warning of the impending destruction of Judah and Jerusalem by the Assyrians, depicting it as a day of darkness and gloom, and judgment by fire. The people are enjoined to adhere to a moral and ethical life of righteousness and humility; an image of ultimate universal salvation is presented, where all people utter the Name of God and worship at "His holy mountain".

Zohar (He/Ar) *Lit.* splendour, radiance; full name, *Sefer ha-Zohar* ('Book of Splendour'); written largely in Aramaic, with some parts in Hebrew; believed by modern scholarship to have been mostly written by the Spanish Kabbalist, Moses de León (1240–1305); the most significant and influential work of the *Kabbalah* (Jewish mysticism), drawing on earlier Kabbalistic literature, gnostic teachings, the *Talmud, midrash* and other sources; written as the sayings and deeds of Rabbi Simeon ben Yoḥai of the second century CE, a literary device that many Kabbalists still regard as true.

The *Zohar* is a composite work comprising several books of *midrashim* (studies, interpretations), homilies and discussions, mostly depicted as the sayings of Rabbi Simeon ben Yoḥai and his disciples, as well as other rabbis who make occasional appearances. The setting is Palestine in the second century CE. Printed editions are usually composed of five volumes in which the first three are called *Sefer ha-Zohar al ha-Torah* ('Book of Splendour on the *Torah*'), and the fourth is the *Tikkunei ha-Zohar* ('Sections of the *Zohar*'). The fifth, *Zohar Ḥadash* ('The New *Zohar*'), is a collection of the sayings

and writings of the Safed Kabbalists assembled by Abraham ben Eliezer ha-Levi Berukhim, and added after the original publication of the *Zohar*.

Some parts of the *Zohar*, such as *Ra'aya Meheimna* ('Faithful Shepherd'), *Tikkunei ha-Zohar* and *Zohar Ḥadash* are independent works which have been added to the original text of the *Zohar*. There were also a number of sections known to some early Kabbalists that were never included in printed editions of the *Zohar*, and have subsequently been lost.

The *midrashim* are largely interpretations of passages from the *Torah* or *Pentateuch* (the first five books of the Bible), interspersed with digressions, insertions, anecdotes, legends, and expositions of passages from other biblical books such as the *Song of Songs*, the *Psalms*, the Prophets, and so on. There are considerable variations between *Zohar* manuscripts, even as to the location of many passages. Some passages also appear in two or three places. The digressions and insertions include two descriptions of the seven palaces in the garden of Eden, to which souls ascend in prayer or upon death; a description of a mystical journey undertaken by Rabbi Simeon and his disciples to the garden of Eden, together with a long discourse from a 'senior' soul in the hierarchy of the next world; a passage on physiognomy and chiromancy, based on *Exodus* 18:21; an account of the disciples' meeting with Rabbi Yeiva, an old man and a great Kabbalist, who disguises himself as a poor donkey driver, and delivers a discourse on the soul; stories concerning young children who discourse insightfully on mystical topics; an interpretation of Ezekiel's vision of the chariot; passages attributed to a mysterious heavenly voice urging the disciples to open their hearts to mystical understanding and summarizing Kabbalistic principles in an enigmatic style; and so on.

From earliest times, the origins of the book and its several parts have been the subject of speculation. To begin with, it was widely believed that the book was the work of Simeon ben Yoḥai; some maintained he had written it while hiding from the Romans in a cave. Others believed it had been put together soon after Rabbi Simeon's death. Others thought that it had been assembled several centuries later from the writings of Rabbi Abba, Rabbi Simeon's scribe. In the sixteenth century, the belief developed that the 2,000 tightly printed pages of the *Zohar* represented only a fragment of the original, which had required 40 camels to transport it.

None of these ideas are supported by an analysis of the *Zohar* itself. The text contains a great many anachronisms and other errors and oddities, linguistic and historical; it copies mistakes originating in medieval texts; there are allusions to Islam; the climate of social and religious laws and customs is commonly that of medieval Europe rather than second-century Palestine; and so forth. Cutting a long story short, during the twentieth century, from a detailed analysis of the text, the Jewish scholar, Gershom Scholem, demonstrated that large sections of the *Zohar*, with the exception of *Ra'aya Meheimna*, *Tikkunei ha-Zohar* and *Zohar Ḥadash* had been written by Moses de León.

After the first appearance of the book, Kabbalists themselves felt free to imitate it, something they would never have done had they believed in the genuine antiquity of the work. Initially, complete manuscripts of the *Zohar* did not exist, and a number of anthologies of various sections circulated. The *Zohar* was understood as a valuable compendium of Kabbalistic lore, but was not regarded as a holy book. It was only during the fifteenth century, and especially after the expulsion of Jews from Spain in 1492, when Jewish thought turned to eschatology and the coming of the Messiah, that the *Zohar* began to acquire an aura of sanctity. Its influence reached a peak during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The first printed editions of the *Zohar* appeared in 1558–60, produced by two rival printers in the neighbouring Spanish towns of Mantua and Cremona. Since the printers had used different manuscripts, there were differences between the two editions. Both were also full of typographical, printing and other errors, many corrected in later editions. Some Kabbalists were opposed to its publication in printed form. Others warned that it contained many errors of a doctrinal nature. Gradually, however, the variant printed editions converged on one common arrangement, as generally found in modern editions, and criticism of the work itself subsided. With the benefit of hindsight, it is clear that no other work of the Kabbalah has had such a far-reaching or long-standing influence.

See also: **The Kabbalah** (1.4), **Moses de León**.

Zoroaster The name given by the ancient Greeks to Zarathushtra.

See **Zarathushtra and Zoroastrianism** (1.3).

Zostrianos One of the longest texts in the Nag Hammadi library; badly damaged, with *lacunae* (gaps) in the papyrus on almost every page; tells the story of how Zostrianos, yearning for a true understanding of spiritual truths, becomes deeply depressed, contemplating whether or not to commit suicide by delivering himself to the "wild beasts of the desert for a violent death". At this moment, his yearnings are answered and he receives a vision from an angel, and is taken up, out of his physical body, and shown the inner workings of creation. This literary and fictional framework provides the author with a means, common enough in ancient times, of describing the inner regions of creation, as he understood them. The text contains a significant element of Greek mystical expression. Several revelational gnostic texts, including one called *Zostrianos,* are mentioned by the Neo-Platonist, Porphyry, in his *Life of Plotinus* (16). Plotinus is opposed to the teachings of at least some of the gnostic schools, especially their dualism, jargon and fanciful cosmogonies.

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*Books are listed alphabetically, by title. Leading definite and indefinite articles in the various languages (*i.e. *'the', 'a', 'an' etc.) are ignored when alphabetizing. Dates in square brackets are the first publication of the work. Dates are CE unless otherwise stated. Languages stated include the romanization of various non-roman scripts, and indicate the main languages used in a book, not necessarily every language which happens to appear. Where more than one language is listed, the first is generally the language of translation and discussion, the others are usually of the primary texts.*

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Are there not enough names now?
Is this not the time to stop?

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